

Hafa Adai!

Palacios, first lady, Apatang lead Christmas lighting ceremony. **PAGE 3**  
Navy plane removed from Hawaii bay after it overshot runway. **PAGE 5**

\$1

# Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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## CCC will entertain IPI settlement offer if it pays \$18.6M 2023 fees

**IF DHS REVOKES  
CNMI'S DISCRETIONARY  
PAROLE PROGRAM**

### Palacios mulls options for Chinese tourists

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
ferdie\_delatorre@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios said his administration is now looking at the CNMI's available options if the U.S. Department of Homeland Security revokes the discretionary parole program that allows it

See **PALACIOS** on Page 4

» **CCC chairman asks IPI to submit a settlement offer if it can't pay the \$62M in 30 days**

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
ferdie\_delatorre@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Casino Commission is willing to entertain a "reasonable" settlement offer from Imperial Pacific International (CNMI)

LLC as long as the \$18.6 million in fees for 2023 are paid within the 30-day notice given to IPI to pay the \$62 million license fees it owes the CNMI government in total.

See **CCC** on Page 4



CHRYSTAL MARINO

CNMI Climate Policy and Program Office special assistant Tina Sablan was the Saipan Chamber of Commerce general membership meeting guest speaker yesterday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

### Local climate change efforts ramp up

By **CHRYSTAL MARINO**  
chrystal\_marino@saipantribune.com  
CORRESPONDENT

The federal government's nationwide efforts to combat climate change and how that effort will go down at the CNMI level was the focus of

yesterday's Saipan Chamber of Commerce general membership meeting at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

Speaking about the new Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program and her

See **LOCAL** on Page 4



### OIA TALKS

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang met yesterday with Interior Department assistant secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor, second from left, and special assistant Abdiel Rozu, third from left, on a number of issues, including the status of Office of Insular Affairs-funded projects, CNMI economic initiatives, convening 902 talks, and other matters. They were joined by Harry Blanco, fourth from left, field representative for the OIA.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

### Review of the CNMI's use of \$36.2M CRF proceeds finds \$11.1M questioned costs

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
ferdie\_delatorre@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

A desk review by an independent public accounting firm hired by the Office of the Inspector

General to check the CNMI's use of \$36.2 million in Coronavirus Relief Fund proceeds showed that the expenditures related to some contracts did not comply with the

See **REVIEW** on Page 4

## INSIDE



### BUSINESS

U.S. employers posted 8.7 million job openings in October, the fewest since March 2021.

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### NATION

President Joe Biden isn't sure he'd be running for reelection if Donald Trump wasn't also in the race.

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### LIFE & STYLE

Four more members of BTS are to begin their mandatory South Korean military duties soon.

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# Local

**KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**  
From left, CNMI Corrections Commissioner Anthony Torres, Guam State Clearinghouse administrator Stephanie Flores, and Guam DOC director Fred Bordallo hold a press conference to discuss possibility of transferring inmates from Guam to Saipan.

## ‘Transfer of Guam inmates will not happen unless the CNMI is OK with it’

**By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**  
kimberly\_esmores@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

Guam Department of Corrections officials who visited the CNMI yesterday to discuss future plans to house Guam inmates on Saipan to combat its overcrowding problem assures that the CNMI community has the final say in the matter.

At the same time, the Guam DOC officials—Guam State Clearinghouse administrator Stephanie Flores, Guam DOC director Fred Bordallo, and Department of Youth Affairs director Melanie Brennan—described their talks on the matter as “very preliminary” and that no agreement has been reached yet.

The three met yesterday with DOC Commissioner Anthony Torres, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, and members of the Legislature. The purpose of the group’s visit is to talk about the possibility of transferring Guam detainees to Saipan to combat overcrowding in Guam’s prison.

“Today’s discussions were very preliminary. We want to make clear that there have been no agreements made just yet. We are at the very early stages of exploring what options are out there to help the CNMI and to also help Guam. That’s really where we are. We are in the early stages of discussion of how we can help each other. There are a lot of logistics that have to be discussed. There’s a lot of questions that need to be answered. There’s a lot of things that both communities have to consider on their own about what we’re going to do and how we’re going to move forward if we were to move forward,” said Flores.

Flores assures that any talks between the leadership of Guam DOC and Saipan DOC on an agreement between the two institutions that would be beneficial to both parties will ultimately come down what the CNMI community wills.

“One of the things we really want to say is there will be no movement of inmates right away, and that will not happen unless the community of the CNMI is on board 100%. We want to make that very clear. We want to make sure this process is as transparent as possible, and we want everybody to ask the questions that they want. We want to make sure that everybody is going into this with their eyes wide open, everybody’s expectations are managed, and everybody gets their questions answered as honestly as possible,” she said.

Flores mentioned that part of their talks with the CNMI administration is to have a townhall meeting down the road for community members to voice their opinions.

Torres echoed this, saying the people of the CNMI community and their safety come first.

“The people come first, their opinions come first and I’m going to value that. This is an opportunity for us to help Guam and it is an opportunity for us to push forward with the rehabilitative programs I would like to institute in our DOC,” he said.

In sharing some shared some insights on the current situation faced by the Guam correctional facility, Bordallo said about 848 inmates are currently housed at the Guam DOC.

“We are experiencing an overcapacity issue right now. This is the highest it’s ever been,” he said.

About half of the detainees at the Guam DOC, Bordallo said, are pre-trial detainees and the number continues to rise.

If an agreement between Saipan and Guam DOC were to happen in the future, Guam DOC has a little over 100 non-violent offenders who may be transferred to Saipan, Bordallo said.

However, Bordallo said these inmates will still be vetted by both Guam and Saipan Torres to ensure the safety of the CNMI community.

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# Palacios, first lady, Apatang lead Christmas lighting ceremony

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**  
ferdie\_delatorre@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, first lady Wella Palacios, and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang led the Christmas in the Marianas Lighting Festivity on Capital Hill Tuesday night to usher in the holiday season in the CNMI.

At the countdown, Wella Palacios pressed the “on” switch, illuminating a giant Christmas tree and many light sculptures and decorations in front of the Office of the Governor’s building.

Cabinet members and their families and friends, some lawmakers, government workers, students, and other people in the community clapped, took photos, and exchanged holiday greetings.

Children posed for photos with two Santa Clauses at the event. The Marianas High School’s Glee Club, Marianas Got Talent, and DPS Blue also performed.

Gov. Arnold Palacios thanked all departments and other offices that helped put together the Christmas decorations.

“Let’s give a round of applause to all those individuals,

departments who contributed their time and resources and their talents to make this happen,” said the governor, drawing cheers from the crowd.

A similar Christmas display was simultaneously lit up last night at the Pedro P. Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe. The governor said they decided to just do the lighting ceremony on Capital Hill because of the ongoing construction work on Beach Road.

In a later interview, Gov. Arnold Palacios wished all people in the CNMI happy holidays on behalf of his wife and Apatang.

“I wish them the best always, that they have a very joyous Christmas with their families despite

Apatang thanked the Lady Wella Foundation and the village committee for organizing this year’s Christmas lighting festivity, and all departments that helped put up the decorations and lightings.

He extended his holiday greetings to all the people in the CNMI as well as those families and friends who are currently in the U.S. mainland and other parts of the world.

Apatang also called for sober driving this holiday



season. He advised people not to drive when they drink and to call somebody to drive them home.

“Let’s stay safe, enjoy the holidays!” he said.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

First lady Wella Palacios presses the button during the Christmas in the Marianas Lighting Festivity in front of the Office of the Governor building on Capital Hill Tuesday night. Also in the photo are Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, and special assistant to the Office of Youth Affairs Delbert Pua.

## Power interruption on Rota on Dec. 10

There will be a scheduled power service interruption on Rota this Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023.

- Time: 7:30am to 3:30pm
- Area(s) Affected: Entire Feeders 1, 2, and 3
- Water Well(s) Affected: None
- Purpose: To perform

preventive maintenance services on the Mitsui generator.

For more information, contact the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.’s Customer Hotline (236-4333) or monitor its Facebook page for the latest updates (<https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/>). (PR)

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
CNMI GOVERNMENT**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**  
RFP NO.: DPW24-RFP No.: 42400010

**SUBMISSION DATE: December 27, 2023 TIME: 10:00 A.M.**  
**“Materials Recovery and Recycling Operations”**

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

**THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.**

The project package will be available on or after **November 23, 2023** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan.

There will be a **Pre-Proposal Conference** for this project on **December 13, 2023**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the Department of Public Works Conference Room 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center Office, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **December 21, 2023** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ RAY N. YUMUL  
Secretary, DPW

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.  
Acting Director, Division of  
Procurement Services

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

# What I Wish for Christmas

## Drawing Contest

OPEN TO KIDS AGES 6 TO 12

**Deadline of Submission:**  
December 19, 2023

**Dimensions:**  
8.5in x 11in to 11in x 17in

**Mediums:**  
Watercolor, Poster Color, Acrylic,  
Crayons & Color Pencils.  
No computer generated artwork allowed.

Draw what you wish for Christmas and tell us why.

Add a short description in your drawing as to what is your Christmas wish and why.

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Artworks must be original and must be Christmas themed.

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For more information, please email  
[sales@saipantribune.com](mailto:sales@saipantribune.com)  
or call (670) 235-2440  
and look for Christine.



# Unique tourist visa in the works for the CNMI

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**  
kimberly\_esmores@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

Although the CNMI faces the possible revocation of its discretionary parole program by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, members of the CNMI business community remain optimistic about a new visa unique to the CNMI that could still set the Commonwealth apart from other U.S. destinations.

In an interview with Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Joseph “Joe” C. Guerrero yesterday, he said the initial re-

action from the Chamber and its members was shock after learning that some members of U.S. Congress want DHS to end the CNMI’s discretionary parole program.

“For some, it was a shock to learn that an economic tool that was provided to us is being proposed to be discontinued without a solution to our economic recovery,” he said.

Guerrero concedes that the discretionary parole program was never a permanent solution for the CNMI and, fortunately, even with the program

ending, a new tourist visa that will be unique to the CNMI is underway.

“Yes, the discretionary program was never a permanent visa for the CNMI, but it was a tool that was provided for our unique situation so that we could have tourists from certain countries [come in] and so we could be as self-reliant as possible. There is this visa program that was a result of the last 902 consultation in 2016. In 2019, the federal government agreed to create this new visa called the Economic

Vitality and Security Travel Authorization Program, or EVSTAP. This will be a sub-program of the Guam/CNMI visa waiver program which we know is a unique visa waiver program that allows our region to grow in terms of tourism. It was a program to allow tourists from certain countries that may not be as readily welcomed in the United States,” he said.

A longer version of this story is available at [www.saipantribune.com](http://www.saipantribune.com)

## LOCAL

From page 1

office’s steps to creating a clean energy economy and the CNMI’s first greenhouse gases inventory, CNMI Climate Policy and Program Office special assistant Tina Sablan said the program is actually an offshoot of the federal Inflation Reduction Act in August 2022. Under this grant program, a total of \$370 billion had been set aside to address the threats posed by the climate crisis, and drive investments to frontline communities and spur innovation and job creation. One of those frontline communities being the islands, one of which is the CNMI.

Under the act, \$5 billion is designated specifically for the Climate Pollution Reduction Program, and \$250 million is

allocated for climate action planning across states and territories. Sablan said that that includes \$500,000 for each of the territories over the course of the four-year grant period.

“[A total of] \$4.6 billion is allocated for implementation and this is to carry out the priority climate action projects of communities throughout the nation. Out of that amount, \$300 million is set aside just for the territories and the Tribes to compete for,” said Sablan.

Sablan said most frontline communities are more impacted by climate change, even if they do not produce as much greenhouse gases as more developed countries.

“No one is really spared from these threats, but some are more vulnerable and disproportionately impacted than others. And though we contribute so little...to green-

house gas emissions on a global scale, islands like ours are frontline communities in the climate crisis,” she said.

Sablan said their mission at the CNMI Climate Policy and Planning Program is to address climate change threats and inequities and reduce the CNMI greenhouse gas emissions and transition the Marianas to a clean energy low carbon economy.

Their main goals, she said, is to achieve significant greenhouse gas reductions by 2030, provide benefits to communities, especially low income and disadvantaged populations; complement other funding sources to maximize greenhouse gases reduction, and pursue innovative measures that can be scaled up and replicated.

“Unlike other territories, the CNMI doesn’t yet have a cli-

mate action plan in place and, like all the other territories, we don’t have yet a baseline data or a greenhouse gas inventory like other states and local communities do for how much we are producing in carbon dioxide, methane [and] other emissions across different sectors. We need this data to be able to make informed decisions in the measures that we choose to reduce emissions and make that transition to the clean energy economy,” she said.

The CPRG aims to address these gaps, Sablan said, adding that they are working to develop the CNMI’s first greenhouse gas inventory, and will be gathering data from local partners in the public and private sector.

A longer version of this story is available at [www.saipantribune.com](http://www.saipantribune.com)

## REVIEW

From page 1

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act and U.S. Department of Treasury’s guidance, which resulted in a total of \$11.1 million in questioned costs.

Wayne Ference of the Castro & Company LLC states in his report dated Aug. 8, 2023—a copy of which was obtained by *Saipan Tribune* yesterday from the Senate—that, based on their desk review procedures, those that did not comply are related to contracts greater than or equal to \$50,000, aggregate reporting less than \$50,000, and

aggregate payments to individuals.

Castro also determined that the CNMI’s risk of unallowable use of funds is high.

Castro recommends that the Office of the Inspector General ask for some missing documentation from the CNMI and follow up on necessary reporting corrections.

Based on the CNMI’s responsiveness to the Treasury OIG’s requests and its ability to provide sufficient documentation, Castro said they recommend that the Treasury OIG determine if a full scope audit is feasible.

The accounting firm initiated on June 16, 2022, its review of the CNMI’s Coronavirus

Relief Funds to evaluate documentation supporting its uses of CRF proceeds as reported in the GrantSolutions portal and to assess the risk of unallowable use of funds.

The scope of the desk review was limited to obligation and expenditure data for the period of March 1, 2020 through March 31, 2022, as reported in Cycles 1 through 8 in the GrantSolutions portal.

The CARES Act appropriated \$150 billion to establish the CRF. Treasury issued a CRF payment to the CNMI for \$36.2 million.

The CARES Act stipulates that a recipient may only use the funds to cover costs that are necessary expenditures in-

curred due to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19, were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020; and were incurred between March 1, 2020 and Dec. 31, 2021.

Castro determined that the CNMI’s contracts greater than or equal to \$50,000 did not comply with the CARES Act and Treasury’s Guidance.

Of the 18 transactions tested, Castro identified exceptions in all 18 transactions, resulting in unsupported questioned costs of \$11,093,139.

A longer version of this story is available at [www.saipantribune.com](http://www.saipantribune.com)

## PALACIOS

From page 1

to let Chinese tourists enter the CNMI without a tourist visa.

In an interview Tuesday night, Palacios said he was already aware of the situation two weeks ago, even before some U.S. lawmakers publicly asked DHS to mandate the visa requirements across all territories.

Palacios said the U.S. Con-

gress was only aware about the discretionary parole program for the CNMI and so it’s going to “make things a lot harder for everyone.”

“With all the media coverage about it, it started making them aware of the situation and they took the position,” the governor said.

In a Nov. 30, 2023, letter to DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, a group of U.S. lawmakers that includes Guam Delegate James Moy-

lan and American Samoa Delegate Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen raised their concern about the United States’ visa policy for Chinese nationals entering the CNMI.

The CNMI is the only U.S. territory into which Chinese nationals can enter without a visa.

The lawmakers said that, under the current requirements, Chinese nationals must meet extremely low standards in order to be granted entry into the CNMI from China.

They urged DHS to change this policy and apply the visa requirements equally across territories.

The Nov. 30 letter was signed by four senators and 28 House members.

In 2019, DHS authorized the discretionary parole program for the CNMI only, which allows Chinese tourists to enter the CNMI for two weeks without having to obtain a non-immigrant visa from a U.S. Embassy in China.

# Dry weather ahead for the Marianas

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**  
kimberly\_esmores@saipantribune.com  
REPORTER

Despite a relatively wetter weather during the past few days, the National Weather Service in Guam says the Marianas can expect drier weather throughout the rest of the week.

According to NWS’ regional weather outlook, a dry-season pattern will persist across the Marianas with moderate trades, mostly sunny skies and only a few light showers in the coming days.

In addition, NWS says combined seas will hover around 5 to 8 feet across the region with a moderate risk of rip currents along north and east exposures and beaches.

Meanwhile, NWS says trades, seas, and surf will increase this weekend as a disturbance passes to the south through Micronesia.

NWS reports that fair weather also remains present across Yap and Palau, with gentle to moderate trades and only a few showers.

“Showers and thunderstorms will begin to move in late this weekend, with winds

becoming moderate to fresh early in the week as a disturbance approaches from the east,” said NWS.

As for Pohnpei and Chuuk, tropical disturbance Invest 90W is generating showers, thunderstorms, and areas of gusty winds across Pohnpei State.

“90W will be the primary weather feature this week as it slowly heads westward, possibly passing near or just south of Chuuk by Saturday. Focus on the impacts the next few days: periods of showers, locally heavy at times, thunderstorms and brief gusty winds,” said NWS.

Farther east, trade winds will surge across the Marshall Islands and Kosrae, the regional overview states.

“A showery pattern is in place over Kosrae while drier conditions are near and north of Majuro. Expect a breezy week ahead with fresh trades across both locations. Trades will ease up this weekend at Kosrae. At Majuro, seas may approach the hazardous levels of 10 feet in the coming days. A small craft advisory will be issued if/when seas reach 10 feet or more,” said NWS.

## CCC

From page 1

This was learned from CCC board chair Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero, who told IPI director Howyo Chi in a letter last Friday that, as he had stated in his previous communications with IPI, the commission is willing to accept a reasonable settlement offer as long as the 2023 casino license fee in the amount of \$15,502,570 and the 2023 annual casino regulatory fee in the amount \$3.15 million are paid up-front prior to or as part of the settlement agreement.

DeLeon Guerrero wrote the letter as a follow-up on the commission’s notice to IPI, which Chi received last Nov. 30, to pay the government within 30 days the \$62 million total amount of casino license fees that remain unpaid in the last four years.

“If IPI is unable to make any payment within the identified deadline, I recommend that you immediately provide the commission a settlement offer acceptable to the Commonwealth,” DeLeon Guerrero told Chi.

Chi told *Saipan Tribune* on Tuesday that they are still working on a response to the offer.

At the CCC board meeting last Thursday, Chi said that IPI’s previous proposal still stands: Payment of \$5 million a year for four years to the CNMI government for

the casino license fee and \$1 million per year for four years to the CCC for the regulatory fee, in exchange for getting back its suspended casino license.

Chi said that CCC’s initial settlement offer—payment of the full \$36 million but lose license exclusivity—was described by IPI as “completely in bad faith negotiation.”

DeLeon Guerrero said in the follow-up letter on Friday that if IPI pays the \$18,677,570 total 2023 fees, they can immediately start working on the settlement agreement before the next CCC monthly board meeting on Dec. 28, 2023, just two days short of the 30-day deadline notice for IPI to pay in full the \$62,010,280 annual license fees.

He reminded Chi that all amounts currently owed by IPI cannot be forgiven.

However, DeLeon Guerrero said a payment plan on the balance can be negotiated in the settlement agreement.

IPI also owes CCC \$17,625,000 from outstanding casino regulatory fees, fines and penalties, and unpaid obligations per a previous stipulated resolution.

In short, IPI owes the CNMI a total of \$79,625,000 from casino regulatory fees, regulatory fees, fines and unpaid obligations.

A longer version of this story is available at [www.saipantribune.com](http://www.saipantribune.com)



# Navy plane removed from Hawaii bay after it overshot runway



AP PHOTO/AUDREY MCAVOY

Contractors place inflatable bags under a U.S. Navy P-8A in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, Friday, Dec. 1, 2023.

**KANEOHE BAY, Hawaii** (AP)—Landing gear from a U.S. Navy jet pulverized coral when it came to a stop in an environmentally sensitive Hawaii bay after overshooting a runway nearly two weeks ago, a state official said Monday.

Kim Fuller, an aquatic biologist with the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, said divers are working to quantify the extent of the damage now that the

## » Coral damage being evaluated

plane has been removed from the water.

Navy officials said Monday that a team worked through the weekend to use inflatable cylinders, or roller bags, to lift and roll the plane off the reef where it crashed on Nov. 20 and move it to the nearby runway at Marine Corps Base Hawaii at Kaneohe Bay.

Rear Adm. Kevin Lenox, the commander of Carrier Strike Group 3 who is leading the \$1.5 million salvage effort, said absorbent material around the plane showed no indication of any fluid other than sea water, giving officials confidence that the plane hadn't released any hazardous materials such as fuel.

A Navy team earlier removed nearly all of the estimated 2,000 gallons (7,500

liters) of fuel from the aircraft.

None of the nine people on board the P-8A—the military's version of a Boeing 737—were injured. The Navy is investigating the cause of the crash.

The Navy released underwater video last week showing the aircraft's wheels resting on parts of crushed coral and much of the rest of the plane floating above the reef.

During a dive Sunday, state divers snorkeled along the shoreline and looked at the plane's path into the water, Fuller said. In addition to pulverized coral at the pri-

mary impact area, there was some coral damage caused by the anchors of containment booms, she said. Some coral had also been overturned or scraped, she said.

"However, I do feel that the impact area likely is much smaller than the size of the aircraft," she said, adding that it will take time to delineate and quantify the extent of the damage.

"I would say we've seen the majority of the worst damage," she said.

Kaneohe Bay is home to coral reefs and a lot of other marine

life. The area hosts an ancient Hawaiian fishpond being restored by community groups.

The plane contributes to the community's distrust of the military, said Wayne Tanaka, executive director of Sierra Club of Hawaii, noting a massive fuel storage facility that sickened 6,000 people when it leaked jet fuel into a Pearl Harbor drinking water well in 2021.

"The Navy just can't help itself when it comes ... to these environmental harms," he said soon after the plane ended up in the bay.

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**DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT  
SERVICES CNMI GOVERNMENT**



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL  
RFP NO.: RFP24-DCCA/HPO-42400004**

**SUBMISSION DATE: DECEMBER 29, 2023 TIME: 10:00 A.M.**

## "DCCA-HISTORIC PRESERVATION EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL DISASTER PROJECT MANAGEMENT SERVICES"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (<https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/>) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOH HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

**QUESTIONS** REGARDING THIS RFP CAN BE MADE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS BY DECEMBER 21, 2023, TO MR. FRANCISCO RABAUIMAN VIA EMAIL AT [frank.rabauliman@gov.mp](mailto:frank.rabauliman@gov.mp)

**THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.**

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ VIVIAN T. SABLAN  
ACTING SECRETARY, DCCA

/S/ BRIEN S. NICHOLAS JR.  
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS



Eli D. Cabrera  
Administrator

**Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

**Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality  
Division of Environmental Quality**

P.O. Box 501304, Saipan, MP 96950-1304  
Tel: (670) 664-8500/01; Fax: (670) 664-8540



Zabrina S. Cruz  
Director, DEQ

## PUBLIC NOTICE

The Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality regulates the emissions of motor vehicles utilizing diesel fuel while upon streets, roads, or highways. In accordance with NMIAC § 65-10-104 (b), "No person shall operate a diesel-powered motor vehicle which emits visible smoke for a period of more than five seconds while upon streets, roads, or highways."

In accordance with NMIAC § 65-10-104 (b) (1), "To ensure compliance with subsection (b), BECQ requires diesel-powered vehicles to be certified by DEQ through visible emission testing." This applies to all personal, business, and government owned vehicles.

To apply for a visible emission test, submit a completed application to any BECQ office. A fee of \$40 shall be assessed upon passing and issuance of a visible emissions certification. If initial testing is failed, retesting shall be performed no later than thirty (30) calendar days; each retest will be assessed an additional fee of \$10.

For more information and for application forms, please contact BECQ at 664-8500 or visit the BECQ website at [www.deq.gov.mp](http://www.deq.gov.mp)



# UOG, Taiwan nursing university iron out exchange programs



From left, Dr. Yvette Paulino, interim dean of the Margaret Perez Hattori-Uchima School of Health; Dr. Sharleen Santos-Bamba, interim senior vice president and provost; Dr. Anita Borja Enriquez, UOG president; Dr. Shu-Fang Vivienne Wu, president of National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences; Dr. Hung-Ru Lin, associate dean of the College of Nursing, NTUNHS; Dr. Li-Ju Lin, director of the International and Cross-Strait Education Center NTUNHS; Dr. Kuan-Ju Chen, UOG associate professor; and Dr. Jeng-Hung Liu, assistant professor of Animal Sciences, NTUNHS gather after the signing of a memorandum of cooperation on Nov. 13, 2023 at UOG.

University of Guam president Anita Borja Enriquez and her counterpart from the National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences recently signed a memorandum of cooperation to begin an exchange of students, faculty, and academic knowledge in their shared goal of educating future nurses.

Dr. Shu-Fang Vivienne Wu, president of NTUNHS, visited UOG to sign the agreement on Nov. 13 accompanied by Dr. Hung-Ru Lin, associate dean of the College of Nursing, and Dr. Li-Ju Lin, director of the International and Cross-Strait Education Center.

Interim senior vice president and provost Dr. Sharleen Santos-Bamba and Dr. Yvette Paulino, interim dean of the Margaret Perez Hattori-Uchima School of Health, also represented UOG.

Enriquez expressed interest in the NTUNHS potentially hosting UOG nursing students who may be seeking an international clinical experience and in exploring some of its advanced technologies, such as healthcare information technology. In exchange, UOG may host visiting NTUNHS students and faculty. NTUNHS has approximately 5,000 students and 500

faculty members.

“We are excited for this new partnership between UOG’s Margaret Perez Hattori-Uchima School of Health and National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences,” said Enriquez. “Nursing students and faculty from both institutions will benefit from the exchange of ideas and program experiences which will contribute to the development of our respective healthcare workforce.”

Wu said the collaboration between the two universities is the result of an invitation from director-general Paul Chen from the Taipei Economic



Dr. Anita Borja Enriquez, University of Guam president, and Dr. Shu-Fang Vivienne Wu, president of National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences, exchange tokens of appreciation after the signing of a memorandum of cooperation on Nov. 13, 2023, at UOG.

and Cultural Office in Guam, Enriquez, and Dr. Kuan-Ju Chen, an associate professor of Agricultural Economics at UOG who also chairs the University’s Asia Pacific Studies Center.

UOG is also expanding the physical capacity of UOG’s Nursing Program, with the construction of a Nursing Annex commencing soon following a groundbreaking ceremony last Nov. 20. **(UOG)**

## Open enrollment begins for gov’t health insurance

The Department of Finance announced yesterday that the open enrollment period for the CNMI Government Group Health and Life Insurance Trust Fund is currently open through Dec. 28, 2023, for coverage effective Jan. 1, 2024.

The premium rates—indicated below—reflect an increase from previous years’ rates and are specified for individual employees, employees with dependents, and coverage for employees and their families. Government employees are encouraged to review the different options that are available so that they can sign up or modify their insurance coverage during the open enrollment period.

“Our administration is committed to ensuring that CNMI residents have access to quality and affordable coverage,” said Gov. Arnold I. Palacios. “Nonetheless, given the fiscal

Active Employees			
Employee	High	Low	Basic
Employee + 1 Dependent	\$106.57	\$57.44	\$33.24
Employee + Family	\$218.47	\$117.76	\$68.15
Employee + Family	\$341.03	\$183.81	\$106.38
Retirees			
Employee	High	Low	Basic
Employee + 1 Dependent	\$115.45	\$62.23	\$36.01
Employee + 1 Dependent	\$236.67	\$127.57	\$73.83
Employee + Family	\$369.45	\$199.13	\$115.24

challenges that we face and the cost containment measures we must implement to continue on the CNMI’s path to economic recovery, we must re-evaluate the government’s share of employees’ and retirees’ premiums.”

Palacios stated that the Department of Finance team is already looking into options that reduce the government’s overall expenditure on healthcare and will be sharing these options and other updates soon.

Finance Secretary Tracy Norita stated that the GHLI team is already contacting

human resource departments at various agencies to provide information about the open enrollment period as well as changes that may be anticipated over the next few months. Employees and retirees can also contact the on-island general agent, whose contact is listed below, for additional information.

Pacifica Insurance, general agent for Aetna Insurance, located in Susupe at the first floor of the Joeten Center, will be available to assist new and existing members. For more information call (670) 234-6267. **(PR)**

## Malichita whole cantaloupe recalled due to possible health risk

The CHCC Environmental Health Disease and Prevention Office, with guidance from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, has inspected stores on Saipan for Malichita brand whole cantaloupes, which have been voluntarily recalled by Pacific Trellis Fruit, LLC based on an ongoing FDA investigation.

The cantaloupes in questions have the potential to be contaminated with Salmonella. EHDP have identified inventory on island and the vendor has been advised to discard these products and to inform customers to do the same.

The products were distributed between Oct. 18 and 26 in California, Illinois, Oklahoma, Texas, Wisconsin, and Canada and sold in various retail supermarkets. The whole cantaloupe is packed in corrugated cartons, the price look-up sticker is labeled “Malichita.”

Brand	Item Description	PLU	Lot Code
Malichita	Whole Cantaloupe	4050	21651
Malichita	Whole Cantaloupe	4050	21699
Malichita	Whole Cantaloupe	4050	21775
Malichita	Whole Cantaloupe	4050	21787
Malichita	Whole Cantaloupe	4050	21870

EHDP is urging food establishments and community members to throw away Malichita brand cantaloupes and to seek medical attention for any foodborne-related illness.

Salmonella is an organism that can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in young children, frail or elderly people, and others with weakened immune systems. Healthy people may experience fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea (which may be bloody), and abdominal pain. In rare cases the organism can get into the bloodstream and produce more severe illnesses such as arterial infections (i.e., infected aneurysms), endocarditis and arthritis.

We thank all our wholesale and food distributors for their continued partnership and cooperation in keeping our community healthy and safe.

For more information about EHDP, call 670-236-2022/27/28 or email the director of EHDP, John Tagabuel, at john.tagabuel@chcc.health. **(CHCC)**



# \$900K grants aims to revitalize CHamoru language, culture

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, based in New York City, recently awarded the University of Guam with a \$900,000 grant to support the creation of a CHamoru Studies Center and other projects to revitalize CHamoru language and culture.

The grant will support efforts to reverse the decline in the number of CHamoru language speakers in Guam from an estimated 34,598 in 1990 to 21,390 based on the 2020 Census.

UOG will also use the grant to support pathways for students attending the Guam Community College and the Northern Marianas College who seek to transfer their course credits toward a Bachelor of Arts in CHamoru Studies at UOG.

"We are immensely grateful to the Mellon Foundation," said UOG president Anita Borja Enriquez. "The grant validates UOG's continuous efforts to revitalize, promote, and proliferate CHamoru language and culture and build capacity for educators who aim to specialize in CHamoru studies and research."

The CHamoru Studies Program and its faculty members—Dr. Kisha Borja-Quichocho-Calvo, Dr. Francine Naputi, Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper, and Dr. Mary Therese F. Cruz—are

the co-principal investigators for the grant.

"This grant comes at a

critical time in the journey of our CHamoru language.

Now, more than ever, strong,

concerted efforts in both the University and our greater community must continue

to sustain Fino' CHamoru to ensure that we produce more fluent and proficient speakers

of the language, so that our language continue to thrive," said Borja-Quichocho-Calvo.

This is the first grant from the highly competitive Mellon Foundation that will support the CHamoru Studies program, according to Dr. James Sellmann, dean of CLASS.

"The Mellon Foundation grant will support the CHamoru Studies program by helping us establish an archive of CHamoru language learning materials and develop the program to prepare students for graduate work in CHamoru studies," said Dr. Sellmann.

Founded in 1969, The Mellon Foundation's programs support exemplary and inspiring institutions of higher education, humanities, the arts, and culture. (UOG)



UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

The Chamoru Studies Program under the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences recently received a \$900,000 grant to help revitalize the CHamoru language and culture. The highly competitive grant award stems from the team efforts of, from left, CHamoru Studies Program principal investigators Dr. Kenneth Gofigan Kuper; Dr. Mary Therese F. Cruz, interim associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences; Dr. Kisha Borja-Quichocho-Calvo; and Dr. Francine M. Naputi; and grant manager Dr. James D. Sellmann, dean of CLASS.

## New investigative reporting initiative for Pacific Islands

**HONOLULU**—The East-West Center, in partnership with Report for the World, has launched a new initiative supporting local newsrooms across the Pacific Islands who are committed to public service journalism.

The Pacific Islands Financial Investigative Reporting and Mentorship Initiative, or FIRM, will support the establishment and expansion of financial investigative reporting units within six Pacific Island newsrooms starting in early 2024. Each of the selected newsrooms will receive salary support to hire a full-time, seasoned financial investigative journalist to staff the unit for up to three years.

Media organizations eligible to apply under this Call for Applications include newsrooms from the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Sāmoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

About the FIRM Initiative Public service journalism is at risk in countries around the world as most local independent newsrooms lack the resources to provide their citizens with professional, verifiable, and trustworthy reporting on critical and under-covered

but important issues that affect public policy and public trust.

Independent media holds the key to checking power and connecting communities by demanding transparency and holding government leaders, administrative agencies, private sector actors, and others accountable for their actions or inactions. Strengthening the voices of independent media can lead to impactful and positive change in good governance practices. This initiative is designed to boost the capacity of local, independent media in the Indo-Pacific region to undertake in-depth and consistent reporting on financial transactions involving the use of public monies, in-

cluding transnational investment schemes, private deal-making, and other opaque finance-related matters that can have major impacts on a country's economic and political systems.

Newsrooms selected to participate in the FIRM initiative will receive specialized and targeted professional development and mentorship services provided by the East-West Center, Report for the World, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, and other expert resources as required. The journalists participating in the FIRM initiative will join the East-West Center's media alumni network and become Corps members

of Report for the World's international network of newsroom partners and journalists committed to transformative, on-the-ground reporting. The FIRM is funded in part by PROJECT Governance, a multi-year partnership between the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Pacific Community, and the East-West Center to strengthen democratic institutions and promote sound, just, and responsive government throughout the Pacific Islands.

### About the East-West Center

The East-West Center was established by the United States Congress in 1960 to serve as

a resource for information and analysis on critical issues of common concern, bringing people together to exchange views, build expertise, and develop policy options. The Center is an independent, public nonprofit organization with funding from the United States government and additional support provided by private agencies, individuals, foundations, corporations, and governments in the region.

The Center has been supporting independent journalism in the Indo-Pacific and the United States since 1967. The EWC Alumni network includes more than 4,000 journalists working in the United States, Asia, and the Pacific Islands who have participated in the Center's prestigious reporting fellowships, dialogue exchanges, collaborative professional development programs, and a flagship International Media Conference held every two years in a major Asia-Pacific hub. The Center's bi-annual International Media Conference offers a unique professional networking opportunity to discuss key issues and trends in media. The only international media conference regularly held with an Indo-Pacific and United States focus, these gatherings have

grown into one of the region's most influential media events.

### About Report for the World

Report for the World is an international journalism program that matches local newsrooms with talented journalists to report on under-covered issues around the globe. By creating a more sustainable and impactful media ecosystem, Report for the World informs, engages, and enables communities through public service journalism. Report for the World is an initiative of The GroundTruth Project, an award-winning nonprofit journalism organization dedicated to rebuilding journalism from the ground up.

Report for the World currently partners with 32 newsrooms in 20 countries across the globe. Selected newsrooms will join its growing network of host newsroom partners, as it deepens its presence in different regions through editorial collaborations and professional development of its reporting corps. Report for the World is supported by Google News Initiative, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Microsoft, JournalismFund.eu and individual contributors from around the globe. (PR)





# Opinion

Hafa Adai!

## Saipan Tribune

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AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

### EDITORIAL

## Failure all around on Santos: Everyone fell down on dealing with this guy

When House Speaker Mike Johnson announced the results of the expulsion vote Friday morning at 11:00:20 (they keep very precise records) Con(gress)man George Santos became plain old regular con man George Santos, ending what we hope is his first and only term in elected office just shy of 11 months, a very short tenure, although he did last longer than Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

While the expulsion was wrong and the two Democrats and 111 other Republicans besides Santos were correct to vote no (another pair of Democrats voted present), 311 bipartisan votes to expel broke precedent and carried the day, ushering Santos out.

His rise and fall was a failure by many people and institutions.

It was a failure of the Republican Party organization in Nassau (once the most potent machine in the country) and Queens to see who this guy was before granting him their ballot line unopposed last year. Having run in 2020 as a sacrificial lamb against Rep. Tom Suozzi, who dispatched him with ease, the GOP bosses gave Santos their line without even making a phone call to see who he was (and who he wasn't, like a college grad, a banker or a Jew).

It was the failure of Democrats in Nassau and Queens and their primary winner, Robert Zimmerman, to expose Santos' fraud. Our competitive elections only work if each side keeps a check on the other side. Zimmerman was the last line of defense against Santos and he let the guy get past him.

It was a failure of the press on Long Island and the city (in which we include the Daily News as well as our competitors at Newsday, the Post and the Times in addition to TV, radio and on the web) to expose Santos' uncountable lies before the general election. Telling New Yorkers about Santos' fantasy life of accomplishment after the voting ended was too late.

Once he won the election, there were more failures. His failure to have shame prevented him from resigning when faced with his mountain of fabrications. The members of the House, mostly notably other New York freshmen like Democrat Dan Goldman and Republican Anthony D'Esposito then failed to have the patience to let the chamber follow its long tradition by agitating for expulsion without either a criminal conviction or a formal recommendation of the Ethics Committee.

Friday, was the failure of the full House to maintain its norms, even with very abnormal individuals like Santos, and break with history.

And there are more failures ahead, as Gov. Kathy Hochul must now schedule a special election, where voters are excluded from selecting the parties' candidates. The lack of primaries means that the Democratic and Republican standard bearers will be determined solely by party bosses, the same party organizations that let Santos slip through.

New York should either have primaries in special elections or otherwise use nonpartisan contests. Either would allow all interested contenders to have their chance to win over voters.

See **FAILURE** on Page 9



## The system worked during Watergate. This time around, I am not so sure

The summer of 1973 was my baptism into national politics, as my teenage self was riveted by the legendary saga of Watergate.

I watched the months of Justice Department investigations, congressional hearings and news reports that laid out the case against a president, Richard Nixon, accused of ordering, and then covering up, a break-in at the Watergate Hotel.

On June 17, 1972, five men were caught breaking into the Democratic National Committee's headquarters at the hotel in Washington. Subsequent government and media investigations documented a seamy series of corrupt acts and cover-ups the led to the Oval Office.

There was the explosive testimony of John Dean, Nixon's former White House counsel; the revelation that Nixon secretly taped thousands of hours of Oval Office conversations; Rose Mary Woods' 18.5-minute gap on one of those tapes; the valiant reporting of Washington Post journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein that brought down a president and inspired me to become an investigative journalist.

On Oct. 20, 1973, Nixon demanded the firing of special prosecutor Archibald Cox at the height of the scandal. Cox had first requested, then subpoenaed, a cache of the secret Oval Office recordings. Nixon refused to comply.

When Cox continued to press for the tapes, he was fired. That night, which became known as the Saturday Night Massacre, it looked as if the government might topple. But the debacle provoked outrage from voters, members of Congress and the media and forced Nixon to appoint a new special prosecutor who successfully subpoenaed 64 taped conversations. The damning content of those tapes forced Nixon to resign in disgrace.

Then, our justice system worked. This time around, I am not so sure.

Fifty years later, the nation faces another enormous moment in the alleged abuse of presidential power.

Former President Donald Trump stands accused of stealing government records, trying to overturn the 2020 election, instigating an insurrection and more. He is under indictment in separate criminal cases in Washington, Florida, Georgia and New York.

Recently, I had a conversation with Jill Wine-Banks, the prominent and accomplished Chicago attorney, MSNBC legal analyst, podcaster and author of "The Watergate Girl: My Fight for Truth and Justice Against a Criminal President." I interviewed her last week for a public program at the Cliff

By **LAURA WASHINGTON**

Chicago Tribune

*Laura Washington is a political commentator and longtime Chicago journalist.*



Dwellers Club in downtown Chicago.

As an assistant special prosecutor then, Wine-Banks investigated the conduct of Nixon and his associates in the Watergate scandal. She is most famous for interrogating Woods, his fiercely loyal secretary, about the circumstances that led to the erasure of the 18.5-minute gap on a key White House tape.

Wine-Banks' book on her Watergate experience was published in 2020.

"I didn't write a book right after Watergate because I thought, well, what do I have to say that's different? And then Donald Trump got elected, and I started seeing parallels," Wine-Banks said.

A big one, that both Nixon and Trump believed they were above the law.

"After he resigned, (Nixon was) interviewed by (journalist) David Frost, and he says, 'Well, if the president does it, it's not illegal by definition.' Basically, the president's above the law," Wine-Banks recalled.

At least Nixon eventually cooperated with the courts and turned over the tapes. Trump has demonized and dodged the legal process at every turn. So, was the Jan. 6 insurrection worse than Watergate?

Even though Nixon "abused" the U.S. Department of Justice by firing Cox, "I never felt that democracy was at risk," Wine-Banks said. However, "Jan. 6 was a real insurrection. And that has been found by a judge that (Trump) is an insurrectionist, that he violated that statute."

Another difference in these 50 years is the media coverage and what we believe to be "facts."

"During Watergate, there were three networks, a couple of major newspapers, and they all had the same facts. Whether you read the

See **SYSTEM** on Page 9



**EDITORIAL POLICY** Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

# ‘Burning desire’ from inside the Cabinet

The governor’s biweekly Cabinet meeting was missing a distinct voice this past Friday and the governor began the meeting with a call “for a moment of silence for the late Ross Manglona,” who passed away earlier in the week. I didn’t know him well, but he certainly had a captivating voice and a seemingly contagious sense of humor. Very apparent as well was his intellect; he was a smart guy, to say the least. My deepest condolences to all who were close to him—I imagine the void he leaves among those closest to him to be vast.

He (like so many who passed on before him) stands as a stark reminder about the fragility (or rather fleeting nature) of life and how quickly the minutiae can fade into a different perspective. It depends on how you look at it. I’ve come to enjoy the view through a lens of mortal light-heartedness, a genuine sense of humility, and a burning desire to be a force for good. Lord knows I fall short more often than not.

The work of the Cabinet continues, of course, and, as director of the Office of Indigenous Affairs, our late colleague leaves behind a solid handprint on the issue of public benefit from public land leases, which should translate to a positive impact in the collective lives of indigenous and other people in our community going forward. Somehow this reminds me of a quote I read recently: “The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life” (R. Tagore).

No doubt age has made me nauseatingly introspective and I can’t help but overthink (even more than usual) on most issues, especially on the meaning or purpose of life in the face of mortality. I probably shouldn’t admit this, but I will anyway—the thought (or rather question) crossed my mind during last week’s meeting, as it often does. If I knew that today would be my last, would I want to be doing what it is that I’m doing now? The simple answer is always on the tip of my tongue: ‘I would rather be fishing.’ My more heartfelt response is that I know how privileged I am to get a regular seat with our heads of state and the opportunity to contribute directly to a better, stronger CNMI. And,

“With great privilege, comes great responsibility.”

I have the luxury, and I hope all of the Cabinet members can say the same, of having some very conscientious co-workers, some with institutional knowledge that frankly we could not operate without. It would be easy for me to set operations on cruise control and do my time as director for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in status quo; in fact, there is legitimate reason for doing just that. Change can be stressful and change simply for the sake of change is often counterproductive. Still, we have identified some clear needs that would improve our services and help us to sustain going forward. And yes, so much of what we need (not to be confused with what we want) requires money—the specifics will be communicated internally—but we know, too, that money is not everything.

Putting aside our monetary needs, so much of what our success as a team requires is an environment of trust, “a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength” of our intentions to do right by each other and by the programs we are entrusted to run. I talk sometimes about the different schools of thought in management, one being the traditional authoritarian with clear lines between the bosses and their subordinates and the other a more blurred-lines approach where mutual respect and friendly exchanges rise to the top. For the most part, it requires those of us in positions of authority to suspend our egos, listen, learn and act decisively when needed. Put another way, I believe the sweet spot is right down the middle—it is not such a fine line—between holding people accountable and being empathetic. For emphasis, the two ends of the spectrum are not mutually exclusive.

I can’t speak for the governor, the lieutenant governor, or anyone else for that matter, but I suspect and will say with some certainty that what they and the rest of us Cabinet members share in common is a burning desire to ensure that when our time comes, we can move on knowing (and have others know) that we left the people, places and things better than we found it. Trust me when I say, I wouldn’t say that if I didn’t believe it and I wouldn’t hesitate to call it out if I thought otherwise.

By **JIM RAYPHAND**

Special to the Saipan Tribune

*Jim Rayphand is the director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and is a former executive director of the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc.*



A final, personal note on things that probably should go unsaid (at least in any public forum): I’m having to rethink a recent decision to stop drinking alcohol for a little while—nearly a month now since my last beer. Perhaps I’m being a little too selfish. It turns out as reported in above-referenced Cabinet meeting that there was a noticeable drop in revenue from excise taxes (more specifically due to a dip in alcohol imports). Let’s just say it’s likely no coincidence, but rather cause and effect—for every action, there is a reaction.

What if our markers of success were how easily we laughed?

For more on the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Office / Office of the Governor, please feel free to contact us at (670) 322-6537/8 or online via www.ovrgov.net.

## FAILURE

From page 8

Another wrinkle in this sad tale is that the Democrats are trying to get the state’s highest court to order the congressional districts redrawn, setting up the possibility that the special election to fill Santos’ seat in February would have different lines by the June primary. The court should just leave everything in place.

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## SYSTEM

From page 8

Tribune, or The New York Times, whether you watched ABC, NBC or CBS, you got the same facts,” she said.

“Nowadays, we live in alternate universes depending on what media we use,” she noted.

Wine-Banks “grew up in an era where ... evidence is fact.”

However, she notes, “voters from 18 to 29 get 90% of their news from social media. Unvetted stuff that anyone can publish. So, we have a problem in terms of what are ‘facts.’”

The lifelong attorney keeps up. Wine-Banks has not only followed the extensive news coverage of the Trump investigations but also has read and studied every indictment and its related evidence, she said.

“Based on that, there is no question that the charges filed in all of these (criminal) cases and the civil case that’s now on trial in New York are accurate.”

All of Trump’s lies have been demolished by myriad investigations, court decisions, and witnesses. But it would take just one “Trumper,” one true believer in the former president’s lies, to get an acquittal, she said.

“And one juror can hang the jury by saying, ‘I will not change my mind. I’m voting to acquit.’”

In the Watergate era, once the secret tapes exposed Nixon’s criminality, the GOP abandoned him, and the overwhelming public and political outrage forced him to resign. Trump is no longer in office and can’t resign, but he is plotting a comeback. It is increasingly likely that the Republican Party will nominate the former president next summer, and he will stand for president in November.

Trump’s supporters are blind to his transgressions, Wine-Banks argued. “So that’s the difference, is that he has developed a cult that will do anything he says and does.”

That is why “30 million people voted for him and will vote for him again,” she said. And the upcoming trials will take months to conclude.

“So, (if convicted) he will not be able to vote for himself, but he could become elected even if he’s convicted and in jail. So that’s a strange set of circumstances, but it is legally possible.”

One that leaves our democracy in a very dangerous place.

# Red Caesarism and GOP Schism Sonnets

## LITERARY NOOK

By **JOEY CONNOLLY**  
Special to the Saipan Tribune

*Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.*



Will autocratic power pac contributors dig deep?  
Will it be a male, female, or Artificial Intelligence VEEP?  
When votes are counted will we read them and weep?

## Red Caesar XLV Unbound Profound

*Said the trial judge, “There is no ‘get out of jail free’ card.*

A laconic litany for Trump unbound  
Rational thought and common sense unfound  
Mental stability completely unwound.  
A disgrace to democracy renowned  
Constant projection up and down  
History calls him a malignant clown  
who made money from his mugshot frown  
He uses ‘bigly’ as a noun  
Going for a second presidential round  
Psychiatrists say he’s mentally unsound  
Sits on a golden toilet throne crowned  
Bought a football helmet and touchdowned  
For way too long been around  
In his massive super ego drowned  
Hamburgers and French fries pound per pound.



“A fascist is one whose lust for money or power is combined with such an intensity of intolerance toward those of other races, parties, classes, religions, cultures, regions, or nations as to make him ruthless in his use of deceit or violence to attain his ends.”

The above is a quote from Henry Wallace who served as the 33rd vice president of the United States from 1941 to 1945, under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Wallace was a Progressive Party member.






Does that quote sound similar to POTUS 45 insults and denigration?

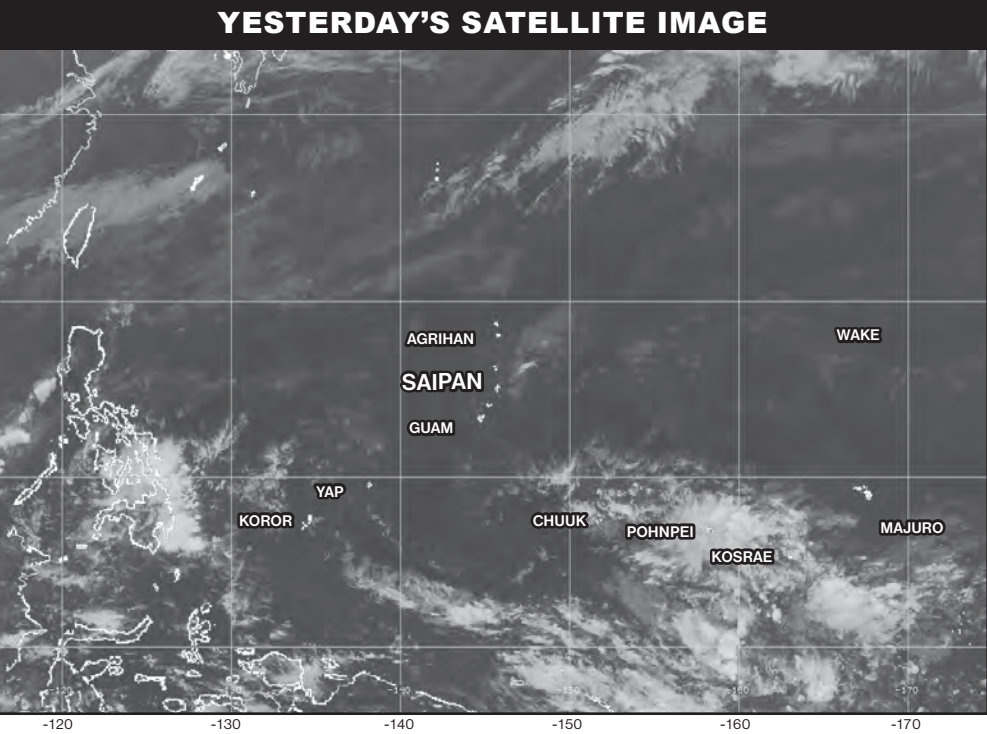
**Who is the 2024 GOP Veep Candidate ?**

Are POTUS 45 and the GOP asleep ?  
About VP candidates not a single peep  
Which ones will be thrown out which one will they keep?  
What kind of crazy fool would make such a leap?  
Were the tides of change on a negative neap?  
Did the GOP send out a Bigly beep beep?  
Will it be some anti US Constitutional creep?  
What benefits will our Democracy reap?  
Once announced will the stock market drop be steep?  
Will the VEEP campaign in a military jeep?  
Will opponents votes wind up in a shredded heap?



# The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY		MONDAY	
									
Mostly sunny with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.		Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated showers.		Breezy. Partly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of showers.		Breezy. Mostly cloudy. A 30 percent chance of showers.		Breezy. Partly cloudy during the day and mostly cloudy at night.	
87	78°	87	78°	87	78°	87	78°	87	78°



PICTURE TIME: 6:10 AM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows scattered showers near and east of the Marianas. They are associated with a trade-wind trough near the islands. The buoys reveal combined seas of 5 to 7 feet, mainly composed of a medium east-northeast swell and smaller north swell plus wind waves.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: <https://www.weather.gov/gum/>

MICRONESIA			▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Mostly Cloudy	88° / 79°	
Palau	Mostly Cloudy	87° / 78°	
Yap	Mostly Cloudy	87° / 80°	
Chuuk	Cloudy	88° / 81°	
Pohnpei	Light Rain Shower	85° / 77°	
Kosrae	Mostly Cloudy	85° / 80°	
Majuro	Mostly Cloudy	85° / 83°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:30 AM	5:46 PM
Friday	6:30 AM	5:46 PM
Saturday	6:31 AM	5:46 PM
Sunday	6:31 AM	5:46 PM
Monday	6:32 AM	5:47 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	1:15 AM	1:35 PM	-
Friday	2:01 AM	2:09 PM	-
Saturday	2:49 AM	2:45 PM	-
Sunday	3:40 AM	3:24 PM	-
Monday	4:34 AM	4:08 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Fair	73° / 58°	
Beijing	Fair	50° / 34°	
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	75° / 67°	
Honolulu	Mostly Cloudy	78° / 73°	
London	Partly Cloudy	45° / 38°	
Los Angeles	Clear	83° / 56°	
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	91° / 78°	
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	76° / 59°	
Miami	Partly Cloudy	82° / 71°	
New York	Cloudy	44° / 39°	
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	58° / 46°	
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	47° / 42°	
Busan	Partly Cloudy	59° / 36°	
Rome	Fog	56° / 45°	
Salem	Clear	60° / 41°	
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	63° / 52°	
Seoul	Cloudy	52° / 33°	
Tokyo	Sunny	61° / 46°	
Washington, DC	Cloudy	51° / 40°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
2:47 AM	High Tide	1.07	
8:46 AM	Low Tide	0.47	
3:40 PM	High Tide	1.62	
10:36 PM	Low Tide	0.46	

## FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA076	9:50AM	10:30AM	Daily	UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily
SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5	UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily	UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau	PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily	UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
				UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily	UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam	UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau	UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam
				7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily	7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily	TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily	7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

## STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

### FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

SAIPAN TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily
ROTA TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily
ROTA TO GUAM					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday
GUAM TO ROTA					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday
SAIPAN TO TINIAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily
TINIAN TO SAIPAN					
FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

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# Business

## AS LABOR MARKET COOLS

# US job openings fall to lowest level since March 2021

WASHINGTON (AP)—U.S. employers posted 8.7 million job openings in October, the fewest since March 2021, in a sign that hiring is cooling in the face of higher interest rates yet remains at a still-healthy pace.

The Labor Department's report said Tuesday that openings were down significantly from 9.4 million in September.

Layoffs were up modestly in October. And the number of Americans who quit their jobs—which generally reflects confidence in their ability to find better pay or working conditions elsewhere—was down slightly.

The drop in job openings last month was particularly steep in healthcare and social assistance, where they fell by 236,000; finance, which includes banking, insurance and real estate and which has been hit particularly hard by higher interest rates, down 217,000; and hotels, restaurants and bars, down 124,000.

Still, despite the sharp drop in October, job openings re-



A hiring sign is displayed at a retail store in Arlington Heights, Ill., on Oct. 10, 2023.

main at historically high levels. They have now exceeded 8 million for 32 straight months—a threshold they had never reached before 2021.

U.S. hiring is slowing from the breakneck pace of the past two years. Still, employers

have added a solid 239,000 jobs a month this year. And the unemployment rate has come in below 4% for 21 straight months, the longest such streak since the 1960s.

The job market has shown surprising resilience even as

the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest rate 11 times since March 2022 to fight the worst bout of inflation in four decades. The resulting higher borrowing costs have helped ease inflationary pressures. Consumer prices were

up 3.2% in October from a year earlier, down from a peak of 9.1% in June 2022.

The Labor Department will issue the November jobs report on Friday. It is expected to show that employers added nearly 173,000 jobs last month. That would be up from 150,000 in October, in part because of the end of strikes by autoworkers and Hollywood writers and actors. The unemployment rate is expected to have remained at 3.9%, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet.

Though unemployment remains low, 1.93 million Americans were collecting unemployment benefits in the week that ended Nov. 18, the most in two years. That suggests that those who do lose their jobs need unemployment assistance longer because it is getting harder to

find new employment.

Overall, the combination of easing inflation and resilient hiring has raised hopes the Fed can manage a so-called soft landing—raising rates just enough to slow the economy and tame price increases without tipping the economy into recession. The cooling of the job market could mean a lessening of inflation pressures and less need for the Fed to keep interest rates high.

The drop in openings “will be welcome news for policymakers” at the Fed, said Rubeela Farooqi, chief U.S. economist at High Frequency Economics. “Overall, the labor market remains strong, but it is cooling. And wages and inflation are decelerating. The data support our view that rates are at a peak and the Fed’s next move will be a rate cut, likely in (the second quarter of) 2024.”

## China raises stakes in cyberscam crackdown on Myanmar groups

BANGKOK (AP)—China is ramping up a crackdown on online scams operated by criminal syndicates in border areas of military-ruled Myanmar in an effort that has included a shoot-out, confession videos and national TV broadcasts of arrests of high-profile suspects.

But the drive has been confined to a limited area and appears unlikely to root out the kingpins behind the human trafficking and other illicit activities aimed at cheating people of their savings via phone calls and online overtures, schemes that are thought to generate tens of billions of dollars in revenue a year.

Over the summer, China announced a series of joint operations with neighboring countries that led to thousands of people being returned to China, many of whom had been lured by the promise of high-paying jobs. Experts say many are victims who were forced into conducting the scams. Those campaigns did not include arrests of ring leaders in Myanmar.

“As soon as we discover them, we hand them over,” said Lu Jiantang, the vice-chair of foreign affairs in Wa, whose job is ensuring that people fleeing fighting in neighboring areas do not include scammers.

On Nov. 18, China’s Ministry of Public Security announced that authorities in northern Myanmar had handed over some 31,000 suspects. Among them, police said, 63 were key players of scamming groups, the police said.

“China seems to be very focused and intent on cleaning its border,” said Jason Tower, an expert on Myanmar’s cyberscam industry at the U.S. Congress-backed think tank United States Institute of Peace said.

Among those arrested are a few related to some of the most powerful people in two special administrative zones close to China’s border with military-ruled Myanmar.

The Kokang Self-Administered Zone and the Wa Self-Administered Division both share a border with China and are heavily influenced by their bigger neighbor. The people living in both places share language and culture with China. Those living in Kokang are ethnically Chinese. Wa senior politicians, who have their own Communist Party, have ties to China’s Communist Party dating back decades and run their government along lines similar to Chinese party committees.

In mid-November, the Chinese police announced they had issued warrants for four people, all surnamed Ming, on suspicion of cyberscams, murder and illegal detention. The family is one of the most powerful in Kokang, with members in the government and local police, and are said to have Chinese passports. A few days later, the state broadcaster CCTV showed footage of police taking three of the four suspects across the border in southwestern Yunnan province.

## What '24 Social Security COLA could mean for your retirement

By DALIA RAMIREZ  
NERDWallet

Social Security benefits for millions of people will rise by an average of over \$50 a month starting in January, thanks to the Social Security Administration’s 3.2% annual cost of living adjustment for 2024, announced on Oct. 12. The change will immediately put more money in current retirees’ pockets, but it also could have a considerable effect on payouts to future retirees.

The 2024 increase is much smaller than last year’s 8.7%, the largest since 1981. But because the COLA reflects inflation, a smaller increase is not necessarily a bad thing; it suggests that inflation is more stable and may help the Social Security Administration provide maximum benefits for longer.

The COLA has been relatively volatile in recent years, however, and future retirees are understandably concerned about the health of the Social Security benefits program.

Here’s what the cost of living adjustments really mean and how to factor Social Security benefits into your future retirement budget.

### A LOWER COLA IS A GOOD SIGN

Though it’s reasonable to assume that a lower cost of living adjustment is worse for Social

Security recipients, it may also point to a healthier economy. The SSA increases the COLA in response to inflation, which means that a hefty COLA jump—like last year’s 8.7%—reflects a serious bump in the costs of goods and services.

“The (Federal Reserve’s) goal is for inflation to be 2% or lower, and therefore, the COLA increases by Social Security would be 2% or lower,” says Randall Holcombe, a certified financial planner and director of wealth planning at Confluence Financial Partners in Pittsburgh. “If your costs aren’t going up so much, then your Social Security isn’t going up as much, but then again, you don’t need Social Security to go up as much,” he says.

Many financial planners incorporate a flat annual COLA into their clients’ retirement plans. “I typically build in an inflation rate of around 3%,” says Elaine Floyd, a certified financial planner and director of retirement and life planning at New York-based financial advisory firm Horseshoeth LLC.

“We want to be conservative when we’re projecting Social Security income,” Floyd says. Even this year’s increase may not be the most accurate predictor of what your benefits might look like decades in the future.

### FOCUS ON WAGES

The COLA isn’t the only annual change to Social Security

benefit amounts. Yearly changes to the lesser-known national average wage index can also significantly impact current and future retirees. The SSA applies the index to your 35 highest-earning years in the workforce as part of its benefits calculation.

“Wages tend to rise faster than prices,” Floyd says. The most recent increase in the average wage index is 5.32%, more than the 3.2% COLA.

“I really want younger people to understand the connection between their own earnings and their eventual Social Security benefits,” Floyd adds. She suggests thinking about that connection throughout your career, especially when making decisions about sabbaticals or job choices.

“Your eventual benefits will reflect the rise in wages over your career,” she says. “Ask for those raises.”

### DON'T DISCOUNT SOCIAL SECURITY ENTIRELY

Many workers set to retire after 2034, when the SSA currently expects to deplete the reserves it holds in the Social Security trust fund, are concerned about whether they can count on Social Security benefits. Social Security benefits now make up, on average, 30% of retiree income, according to the SSA, a significant chunk.

But Holcombe says he re-

minds wary clients that most of the Social Security program is funded directly from current employee and employer taxes.

Because of declining birth rates, the gap between the number of workers paying Social Security taxes and the number of retirees receiving benefits is larger now. “The trust fund exists to make up the shortfall,” Holcombe says, explaining that the fund works as a buffer to ensure retirees receive full benefits despite declining taxpayer funding.

There are ways to prepare for volatility or major changes, especially if you have a while to go before retirement. Individual retirement accounts and a well-rounded investment portfolio can balance out some of that uncertainty over the course of decades.

“A little bit over a long time goes a long way with the stock market,” Holcombe says. “It’s a lot easier to make those adjustments in your 20s and 30s than it is when you’re 50 to 60 and thinking about retirement.”

Holcombe adds that any changes the SSA makes to the program are more likely to affect future retirees, who have more time now to plan accordingly.

“It is not prudent to assume there won’t be any changes by the time (millennials) retire,” Holcombe says. “But it’s also not prudent to discount Social Security entirely.”



# Nation

BIDEN TELLS DONORS WE CAN'T LET TRUMP WIN

## 'If Trump wasn't running I'm not sure I'd be running'

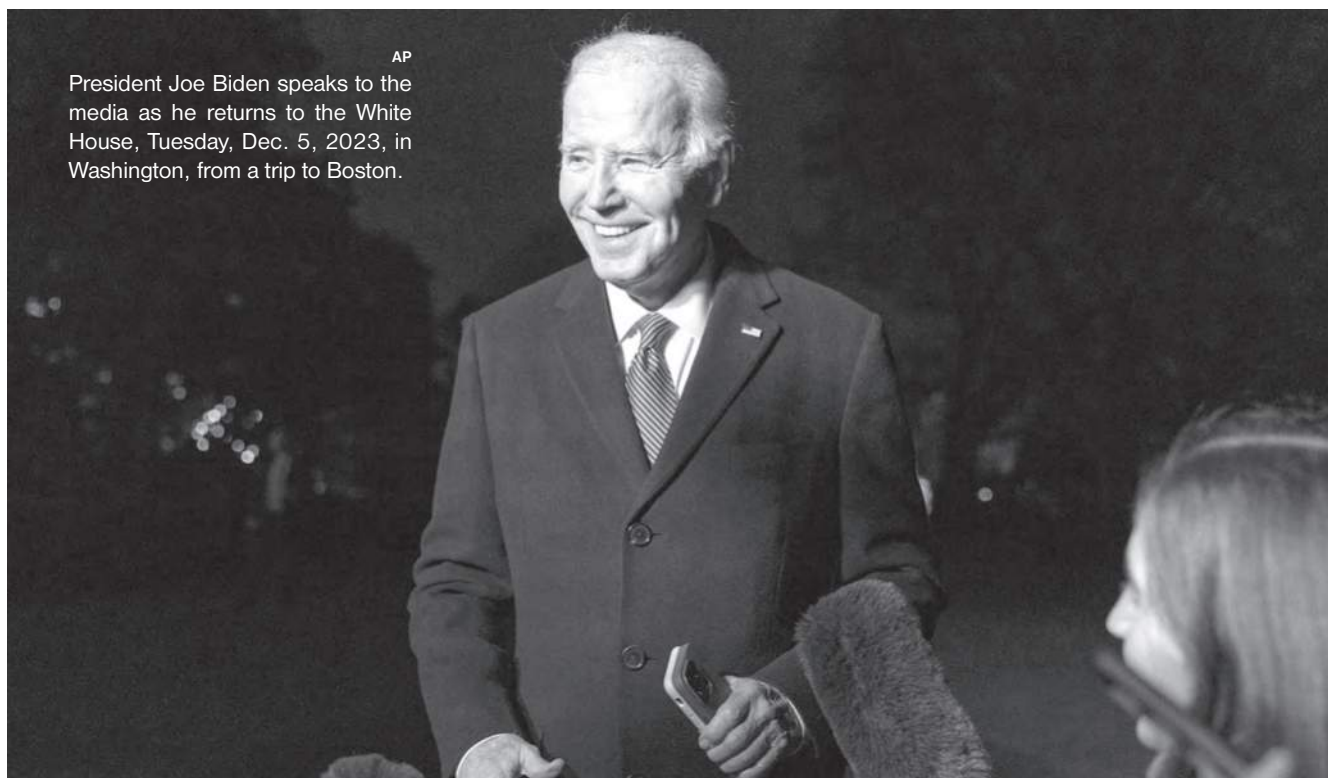
**BOSTON** (AP)—President Joe Biden told campaign donors Tuesday that he wasn't sure he'd be running for reelection if Donald Trump wasn't also in the race, warning that democracy is "more at risk in 2024" and that the former president and his allies are out to "destroy" democratic institutions.

The president was using a trio of fundraisers to caution against what might happen should his predecessor again claim control of the White House, noting that Trump has described himself as his supporters' "retribution" and has vowed to root out "vermin" in the country.

"We've got to get it done, not because of me. ... If Trump wasn't running I'm not sure I'd be running. We cannot let him win," Biden said, hitting the last words slowly for emphasis.

Biden's forceful rhetoric came as Trump, the current GOP front-runner, who tried to overturn the 2020 election he lost and is facing criminal charges connected to those efforts, attempted over the weekend to turn the tables by calling Biden the "destroyer of American democracy."

Trump on Tuesday was asked by Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity to promise he "would never abuse power as retribu-



AP  
President Joe Biden speaks to the media as he returns to the White House, Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2023, in Washington, from a trip to Boston.

tion against anybody."

"Except for day one," Trump responded. "I want to close the border and I want to drill, drill, drill."

"After that I'm not a dictator," Trump added.

Biden's campaign quickly seized on the comments with an email that read, "Donald Trump: Day One Dictator." Later, Biden was asked by reporters whether he would be running if Trump

wasn't and gave a slightly different comment, saying, "I expect so, but look, he is running and I have to run."

He was asked if he would drop out if Trump did and said, "No, not now."

Biden, who said he is not alone in sounding the alarm over Trump, noted that Trump is the "only losing candidate" in U.S. history to not accept the results. Biden also said that

on Jan. 6, 2021, as Trump supporters violently stormed the U.S. Capitol in a failed attempt to stop the certification of the election results, Trump sat in his dining room just off the Oval Office, "watching them threaten his own vice president."

Biden also highlighted recent warnings about Trump from former Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., calling her a "powerful voice."

## Trump declines to rule out abusing power to seek retribution if he returns to White House

**NEW YORK** (AP)—Former President Donald Trump declined to rule out abusing power if he returns to the White House after Fox News Channel host Sean Hannity asked him Tuesday to respond to growing Democratic criticism of his rhetoric.

The GOP presidential front-runner has talked about targeting his rivals—referring to them as "vermin"—and vowed to seek retribution if he wins a second term for what he argues are politically motivated prosecutions against him. As Trump has dominated the Republican presidential primary, President Joe Biden has stepped up his own warnings, contending Trump is "determined to destroy American democracy."

"Under no circumstances, you are promising America tonight, you would never abuse power as retribution against anybody?" Hannity asked Trump in the interview taped in Davenport, Iowa.

"Except for day one," Trump responded. "I want to close the border and I want

to drill, drill, drill."

Trump then repeated his assertion. "I love this guy," he said of the Fox News host. "He says, 'You're not going to be a dictator, are you?' I said: 'No, no, no, other than day one. We're closing the border and we're drilling, drilling, drilling. After that, I'm not a dictator.'"

Earlier in the interview, Hannity had asked Trump if he "in any way" had "any plans whatsoever, if reelected president, to abuse power, to break the law to use the government to go after people."

"You mean like they're using right now?" Trump replied.

Trump's campaign rhetoric and sweeping plans for a second term that include firing large swaths of the federal bureaucracy and targeting his rivals have alarmed Democrats and become a chief election argument for Biden as he prepares for a potential rematch against Trump.

"Donald Trump has been telling us exactly what he will do if he's reelected and tonight he said he will be a dictator

on day one. Americans should believe him," Biden campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez said in a statement.

At a series of fundraisers Tuesday, Biden again warned that Trump and his allies are out to "destroy" democratic institutions as he assailed the GOP front-runner, who tried to overturn the results of the 2020 election and is facing criminal charges connected to those efforts.

Trump, meanwhile, has tried to turn the tables on Biden and argued in a Saturday speech in Iowa that the president is the real "destroyer of American democracy" as he repeated his longstanding contention that the four criminal indictments against him show Biden is misusing the federal justice system to damage his chief political rival.

Trump has promised to prosecute Biden if he wins.

Hannity, a longtime Trump supporter and adviser, has often seemed to use his interviews to coach the former president to say things that will benefit him

politically. The questions Tuesday appeared to be another example of those efforts.

The event had been advertised as a town hall the day before Trump's leading rivals gather at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa for the fourth GOP debate. While town halls typically feature audience questions, only Hannity asked questions of Trump on Tuesday. He taped a similar interview with Trump in July.

Trump is once again planning to skip the debate and will spend the evening at a fundraiser in Florida instead.

Trump has been dominating his rivals both nationally and in Iowa, which will kick off the election with its caucuses on Jan. 15. That includes Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has staked his campaign on the first-in-the-nation contest, and former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, who has been gaining momentum following a series of well-reviewed performances at the debates.

DeSantis, who on Saturday completed his campaign promise to visit each of Iowa's 99 counties, has repeatedly called on Trump to join the debates.

### ACROSS THE NATION

#### Families of 3 Black victims in fatal Florida Dollar General shooting plead for end to gun violence

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla.**

(AP)—Lawyers and family members of three Black people who were fatally shot during a racially motivated attack at a north Florida Dollar General on Tuesday blamed the national chain for not providing security to protect customers and employees. They are suing the store's landlord, operator and security contractor for negligence, noting that lax security led to the deaths of Angela Carr, 52, Jerrald Gallion, 29, and A.J. Laguerre, 19, in August. On Tuesday morning, a team of lawyers—including civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump, as well as Michael Haggard and Adam Finkel—stood alongside family members of the three people killed that day, pleading for the gun violence to stop. "These families have lost everything. And they are here so that this never happens again," Crump said. "We have a gigantic gun violence problem in the United States of America, and these families right here have had enough." The gunman, 21-year-old Ryan Palmetter, had attempted to enter another store and the campus of a historically Black college, but he was stopped by the presence of security guards at both places, authorities said. Then he went to the Dollar General in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Jacksonville.

**New Mexico governor proposes \$500M to treat fracking wastewater**  
SANTA FE, N.M. (AP)—

"American democracy, I give you my word as a Biden, is at stake," the president said at the first of three campaign fundraisers in the Boston area. Drawing some laughter from donors, Biden also mused: "He didn't even show up at my inauguration. I can't say I was disappointed, but he didn't even show up."

The warnings by Biden are increasingly part of his pitch to donors: that democracy is at stake if Trump were to win again and he must be defeated. The president is pushing to raise money for his reelection effort before the end of the year, appearing at seven events through Monday—with more to come. The events in Boston on Tuesday benefit his campaign and the broader Democratic Party.

New Mexico would underwrite development of a strategic new source of water by buying treated water that originates from the used, salty byproducts of oil and natural gas drilling, and help preserve its freshwater aquifers in the process, under a proposal from the state's Democratic governor. The initiative from Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, announced Tuesday from the international climate conference at Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, would set water purification standards and purchase treated water that originates from oil fields as well as the state's vast natural underground reservoirs of brine. It requires legislative approval. The idea is to create a government-guaranteed market for the commodity—treated water—and attract private enterprise to build desalinization and treatment facilities, securing new sources of water for industrial applications. The administration hopes to make the water available to businesses ranging from microchip manufacturers to hydrogen fuel producers that separate the element from water in an energy-intensive process. Lujan Grisham said she'll ask the Legislature to set aside \$500 million to underwrite acquisition of treated water. The arrangement would harness the state's bonding authority and financial reserves held in its multibillion-dollar Severance Tax Permanent Fund. The trust, founded in the 1970s, is sustained by taxes on the extraction of oil, natural gas and other minerals from state land.



# Asia

## Taliban education guidelines also harm boys, not just girls

**ISLAMABAD** (AP)—The Taliban's "abusive" educational policies are harming boys as well as girls in Afghanistan, according to a Human Rights Watch report published Wednesday.

The Taliban have been globally condemned for banning girls and women from secondary school and university, but the rights group says there has been less attention to the deep harm inflicted on boys' education.

The departure of qualified teachers including women, regressive curriculum changes and the increase in corporal punishment have led to greater fear of going to school and falling attendance.

Because the Taliban have dismissed all female teachers from boys' schools, many boys are taught by unqualified people or sit in classrooms with no teachers at all.

Boys and parents told the rights group about a spike in the use of corporal punishment, including officials beating boys before the whole school for haircut or clothing infractions or for having a mobile phone. The group interviewed 22 boys along with five parents

in Kabul, Balkh, Herat, Bamiyan and other communities in eight provinces.

The Taliban have eliminated subjects like art, sports, English and civic education.

"The Taliban are causing irreversible damage to the Afghan education system for boys as well as girls," said Sahar Fetrat, who wrote the report. "By harming the whole school system in the country, they risk creating a lost generation deprived of a quality education."

Students told Human Rights Watch that there are hours during the school day when there are no lessons because there is a lack of replacement teachers. So they said they do nothing.

Taliban government spokesmen were not available for comment on the report. The Taliban are prioritizing Islamic knowledge over basic literacy and numeracy with their shift toward madrassas, or religious schools.

The Taliban have barred women from most areas of public life and work and stopped girls from going to school beyond the sixth grade as part of harsh measures they imposed after taking power in 2021.

According to the U.N. chil-

dren's agency, more than 1 million girls are affected by the ban, though it estimates 5 million were out of school before the Taliban takeover due to a lack of facilities and other reasons.

The ban remains the Taliban's biggest obstacle to gaining recognition as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan. But they have defied the backlash and gone further, excluding women and girls from higher education, public spaces like parks and most jobs.

The new report suggests that concerned governments and U.N. agencies should urge the Taliban to end their discriminatory ban on girls' and women's education and to stop violating boys' rights to safe and quality education. That includes by rehiring all women teachers, reforming the curriculum in line with international human rights standards and ending corporal punishment.

"The Taliban's impact on the education system is harming children today and will haunt Afghanistan's future," Fetrat said. "An immediate and effective international response is desperately needed to address Afghanistan's education crisis."

### ASIAN BRIEFS

#### Heavy rains leave at least 12 dead before storm Michaung makes landfall on India's southeast coast

**HYDERABAD, India** (AP)—Twelve people died in the downpour before Tropical Storm Michaung made landfall along India's southeast coast Tuesday, bringing further torrential rains and strong winds, officials said. The storm entered Andhra Pradesh state with maximum sustained winds of 90-100 kph (56-62 mph) and gusts up to 110 kph (68 mph), the Indian Meteorological Department said, adding that the storm would weaken over the next few hours. Authorities were on high alert for heavy showers over the next 24 hours. Another state in the south, Tamil Nadu, experienced days of heavy rains ahead of the storm. Downpours triggered accidents that led to at least 12 deaths across vulnerable districts, officials told the Press Trust of India news agency. In Tamil Nadu's capital city of Chennai, rain from the storm's outer reaches caused walls to collapse, uprooted trees and submerged roads and cars in knee-deep waters.

#### A roadside bombing in commercial center of Peshawar wounds at

#### least 3 people

**PESHAWAR, Pakistan** (AP)—A roadside bomb went off near a school in northwestern Pakistan on Tuesday, wounding at least three passersby and damaging windows of a nearby bank and several shops, authorities said. The bombing happened in the commercial center of Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, Bilal Ahmed Faizi, a spokesman for the state-run emergency service, told reporters. The province is a former stronghold of the militant Pakistani Taliban group, also known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP. Faizi said security forces were at the scene of the blast and officers were working on finding out who planted the bomb in the city's commercial hub of Warsak Road. The province has witnessed a rise in violence with several deadly attacks. In January, at least 101 people were killed when a suicide bomber targeted a mosque in Peshawar. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but suspicion is likely to fall on the Pakistani Taliban. Though they are a separate group, they are allied with the Afghan Taliban and have become emboldened since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in August 2021.

#### Bus crashes in western Thailand, killing 14 people and injuring more than 30 others

**BANGKOK** (AP)—A bus crashed in western Thailand early Tuesday, killing 14 people and injuring more than 30 others, officials said. The accident occurred in Prachuap Khiri Khan province as the bus was traveling from the capital, Bangkok, to Songkhla province in the deep south. It was carrying 49 people when it ran off the road and hit a tree near Hat Wanakorn National Park, a local police official said. Prachuap Khiri Khan province is located on a coastal stretch between the Gulf of Thailand and Myanmar. "We presume the driver might have fallen asleep," said Pol. Col. Weerapat Ketesa, the superintendent of the Huay Yang Police Station, adding that officials were waiting for the result of a blood test on the driver, who survived the accident. Police were still investigating what caused the crash, he added. Most victims were Thai and a few were Burmese, Weerapat said. Some 35 people were being treated for injuries at local hospitals, according to the Sawang Rungrueang Rescue Foundation.

# World

## Israeli troops march into Gaza's second-largest city



A woman mourns her child and her husband killed in an Israeli army bombardment of the Gaza Strip, in the hospital in Khan Younis, Tuesday Dec. 5, 2023.

### » Intensifies strikes in bloody new phase of the war

**DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip** (AP)—Israel said Tuesday that its troops had entered Gaza's second-largest city as intensified bombardment sent streams of ambulances and cars racing to hospitals with wounded and dead Palestinians, including children, in a bloody new phase of the war.

The military said its forces were "in the heart" of Khan Younis, which has emerged as the first target in the expanded ground offensive into southern Gaza that Israel says aims to destroy Hamas. Military officials said they were engaged in the "most intense day" of battles since the ground offensive began more than five weeks ago, with heavy firefights also taking place in northern Gaza.

The assault into the south threatens to fuel a new wave of displaced Palestinians and a worsening of Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe. The U.N. said 1.87 million people—more than 80% of Gaza's population—have been driven from their homes, and that fighting is now preventing distribution of food, water and medicine outside a tiny sliver of southern Gaza. New military evacuation orders are squeezing people into ever-smaller areas of the south.

Bombardment has grown fiercer across the territory, including areas where Palestinians are told to seek safety. In the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah, just north of Khan Younis, a strike Tuesday destroyed a house where dozens of displaced people were sheltering. At least 34 people were killed, including at least six children, according to an Associated Press reporter at the hospital who counted the bodies.

Footage from the scene showed women screaming from an upper floor of a house shattered to a concrete shell. In the wreckage below, men pulled the limp body of a child from under a slab next to a burning car. At the nearby hospital, medics tried to resuscitate a young boy and girl, bloodied and unmoving on a stretcher.

Israel's assault in retaliation for Hamas's Oct 7 attack has killed more than 15,890 people in Gaza—70% of them women and children—with more than 42,000 wounded, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths. It says hundreds have been killed or wounded since a weeklong cease-fire ended Friday, and many still are trapped under rubble.

Israel says it must remove Hamas from power to prevent a repeat of the attack that ignited the war, when Hamas and other militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took captive some 240 men, women and children.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday the military would have to retain open-ended security control over the Gaza Strip long after the war ends. His comments suggested a renewed direct Israeli occupation of Gaza, something the United States says it opposes.

Netanyahu said only the Israeli military can ensure Gaza remains demilitarized. "No international force can be responsible for this," he said at a news conference. "I'm not ready to close my eyes and accept any other arrangement."

Under U.S. pressure to prevent further mass casualties, Israel says it is being more precise as it widens its offensive and is taking extra steps to urge civilians to evacuate out of its path. Weeks of bombardment and a ground offensive obliterated much of northern Gaza.

The military accuses Hamas of using civilians as human shields when the militants operate in dense residential areas. But Israel has not provided accounting for targeting in individual strikes, some of which have leveled entire city blocks and complexes of dozens of multi-story apartment towers.

Military Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi acknowledged that Israeli forces use heavy force against civilian structures, saying militants keep weapons in houses and buildings so fighters in civilian clothes can use them to fire on troops.

"Striking them requires significant use of fire, both to target the enemy but also to, of course, protect our forces," he said. "Therefore the forces operate powerfully."

Halevi said his forces had begun the "third phase of the ground operations," moving against Hamas in the south after seizing much of the north. Israel has not given specific details on troop movements.

Residents said troops advanced toward Bani Suheila, on Khan Younis' eastern edge. Israeli forces also appear to be moving to partially cut across the strip between Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah. Satellite photos from Sunday showed around 150 Israeli tanks, armored personnel carriers and other vehicles on the main road between the two cities.



# Environment

## Concerns raised over Gaza's environment, devastated by war

**DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)**—As leaders, officials and activists descend on Dubai for United Nations climate talks to discuss saving Earth, another environmental crisis is nearby, and it's raising concerns among summit participants.

Devastated by a nearly two-month-long assault by Israeli airstrikes and ground fighting, large swaths of Gaza have been flattened, agricultural lands have been destroyed, olive trees that have stood for generations are scorched and dwindling water resources are contaminated. Experts warn that white phosphorus—a chemical illegal under international law that a human rights group says is in used in Israeli operations—could also be detrimental to the environment, including the air and soil. Palestinians are worried that the land could take years to recover, and activists at the summit are tying the plight of Gazans to climate justice globally.

The Secretary-General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Jagan Chapagain warned during the summit that Gaza could “become an environmental catastrophe.”

But with the destruction of much of Gaza's infrastructure and an exceptionally heavy human cost—over 15,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed there since October—it's im-



Pro-Palestinian demonstrators participating in a protest against the Israel-Hamas war hold a sign at the COP28 U.N. Climate Summit, Sunday, Dec. 3, 2023, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

possible for the country to give climate and environment the attention it needs, said Hadeel Ikhmais, a climate change expert with the Palestinian Authority, at the summit's first-ever State of Palestine Pavilion.

“We have policies, we have indices, we have ... a lot of strategies and plans, well developed. But now we have to rethink all of what we've been working for the last ten years because what happened in Gaza destroyed everything,”

she said. “We have to build the city all over again.”

She asked: “What kind of climate justice are we talking about while all the people in Palestine are endangered and their lives are lost?”

Gaza's water has long been scarce—but the war has made it even more acute. Israel cut off water pipelines and electricity, meaning desalination plants couldn't run, leading to a host of health and sanitation concerns for residents. Agriculture in Gaza, mainly olive trees and cit-

rus fruits as well as other plants, has been decimated because of water shortages and the devastation of the land.

White phosphorus, that human rights groups say was used in densely populated areas, is illegal under international law when used on civilians. It can set buildings on fire and burn human flesh. It poses health risk for survivors and can get deep into soil and water.

War also raises climate concerns: Militaries worldwide are responsible for 5.5% of all greenhouse gas emissions, according to the Conflict and Environment Observatory and Scientists for Global Responsibility, and militaries are under no obligation to report or reduce their carbon footprint.

Climate activists, who largely support calls for a ceasefire and justice for Palestinians, have centered the issue in protests at the U.N. talks. They say

that climate justice—the idea that saving Earth from hotter temperatures is linked to more just world for everyone, especially the most vulnerable—is inextricably linked with security and freedom for Palestinians living under Israeli occupation because both crises are fueled by colonization and capitalism.

“The Palestinian struggle is a struggle for self-determination and climate justice is a struggle for self-determination,” said Katherine Robinson, a climate campaigner from South Africa. “There is no climate justice in occupied territories. There's no climate justice during war and there's no climate justice during apartheid.”

Rania Harara, from the MENA feminist task force, agreed that climate justice goes hand in hand with Palestinian solidarity.

“We cannot sit here and

talk about climate justice without talking about human rights,” she said, to applause from the audience at an event on Saturday.

The war on Gaza is also affecting how much funding can be diverted to climate initiatives, said Mohamed Adow, the director of Power Shift Africa, a Nairobi-based climate and energy think-tank.

Adow says wars and conflict are using up much needed climate cash that could have otherwise been very useful to help protect vulnerable communities from climate disaster. He used the example of Ukraine, where he says trillions of dollars were sent at a time that the international community was struggling to mobilize a hundred billion for climate finance.

“Demilitarization across the world must be a key component of climate justice,” Adow said.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry's top diplomat for the Mideast, Oded Joseph, said Israel's priority at the moment is fighting and protecting their civilians, with climate and environmental crises being dealt with “once we meet that objective,” he said.

The war began on Oct. 7 when an attack on Israel killed 1,200 people and was retaliated with a punishing weeklong air and later ground assault on the Gaza Strip with no end in sight. A nearly week-long temporary truce ended Friday.

But beyond the war, the wider occupation is still detrimental to efforts toward climate and environmental justice, activists say.

“Climate justice is inseparable from justice for Palestinians,” said Dylan Hamilton, policy coordinator for the Alliance of Non-Governmental Radical Youth. “There can be no climate justice on occupied land.”

## US joins other nations in swearing off coal power

**DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)**—The United States committed Saturday to the idea of phasing out coal power plants, joining 56 other nations in kicking the coal habit that's a huge factor in global warming.

U.S. Special Envoy John Kerry announced that America was joining the Powering Past Coal Alliance, which means the Biden Administration commits to building no new coal plants and phasing out existing plants. No date was given for when the existing plants would have to go, but other Biden regulatory actions and international commitments already in the works had meant no coal by 2035.

“We will be working to accelerate unabated coal phase-out across the world, building stronger economies and more resilient communities,” Kerry said in a statement. “The first step is to stop making the problem worse: stop building new unabated coal power plants.”

Coal power plants have

already been shutting down across the nation due to economics, and no new coal facilities were in the works, so “we were heading to retiring coal by the end of the decade anyway,” said climate analyst Alden Meyer of the European think-tank E3G. That's because natural gas and renewable energy are cheaper, so it was market forces, he said.

As of October, just under 20% of the U.S. electricity is powered by coal, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. The amount of coal burned in the United States last year is less than half what it was in 2008.

Coal produces about 211 pounds (96 kilograms) of heat-trapping carbon dioxide per million BTUs of energy produced, compared to natural gas which produces about 117 pounds (53 kilograms) and gasoline which is about 156 pounds (71 kilograms), according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The U.S. had been pushing

other nations, especially China and India which are building new coal plants pell-mell, to get rid of the fuel, which causes more heat-trapping carbon emissions than other power systems.

Saturday's action “sends a pretty powerful international signal that the U.S. is putting its money where its mouth is,” Meyer said.

The Powering Past Coal Alliance started six years ago and had 50 country members until Saturday when the United States and six others joined, said alliance spokeswoman Anna Drazkiewicz. Others joining Saturday include the Czech Republic and the Dominican Republic.

“Energy transition is not an easy task and as such requires strong cooperation and support,” said Kosovo environment minister Artane Rizvanolli. “Joining the Powering Past Coal Alliance reiterates Kosovo's clear commitment and ongoing efforts towards a socially just and clean energy sector.”

## India builds its largest renewable energy project

**KHAVDA, India (AP)**—Rising from the bare expanse of the large salt desert that separates India from Pakistan is what will likely be the world's largest renewable energy project when completed three years from now.

The solar and wind energy project will be so big that it will be visible from space, according to developers of what is called the Khavda renewable energy park, named after the village nearest to the project site.

At the site, thousands of laborers install pillars on which solar panels will be mounted. The pillars rise like perfectly

aligned concrete cactuses that stretch as far as the eye can see. Other workers are building foundations for enormous wind turbines to be installed; they also are transporting construction material, building substations and laying wires for miles.

When completed, the project will be about as large as Singapore, spreading out over 726 square kilometers (280 square miles). The Indian government estimates it will cost at least \$2.26 billion.

Shifting to renewable energy is a key issue at the ongoing COP28 climate summit. Some leaders have voiced support

for a target of tripling renewable energy worldwide in any final agreement while curbing use of coal, oil and natural gas, which spew planet-warming gases into the atmosphere.

What makes this heavy industrial activity peculiar is that it's taking place in the middle of the Rann of Kutch in western India's Gujarat state. The Rann is an unforgiving salt desert and marshland at least 70 kilometers (43.5 miles) from the nearest human habitation but just a short army truck ride away from one of the world's most tense international borders separating the two South Asian nations.



Life & Style

4 more BTS members to begin South Korean military service

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—Four more members of the K-pop supergroup BTS are to begin their mandatory South Korean military duties soon, their management agency said.

Big Hit Music said in a statement Tuesday that the enlistments are “upcoming” but didn’t disclose the starting dates. South Korean media reported that all four members will begin their duties next week—RM and V on Dec. 11 and Jimin and Jung Kook, who are scheduled to enlist together, on Dec. 12.

There will be no official events on the day of their entrance to military bases, Big Hit Music said. The agency advised fans to refrain from visiting the sites to prevent any possible crowding-related issues.

Three other BTS members — Jin, J-Hope and Suga — have already begun their military duties. Jin and J-Hope are



Members of South Korean K-pop band BTS, V, SUGA, JIN, Jung Kook, RM, Jimin, and j-hope from left to right, pose for photographers ahead of a news conference to introduce their new single “Butter” in Seoul, South Korea, May 21, 2021.

performing active service in the army while Suga is serving as a social service agent, an alternative form of military service in the country.

In South Korea, all able-bodied men are required to serve about 18-21 months in the military under a conscription system established to maintain readiness against potential aggressions from rival North Korea.

Last year, fierce public debate flared over whether BTS members should be exempted from their military duties. But Big Hit Music later said all seven members would fulfill their obligations. The agency said both the company and the BTS members were looking forward to reconvening as a group around 2025 following their service commitment.

South Korean law grants exemptions to athletes, classical and traditional musicians, and ballet and other dancers, if they are deemed to have enhanced the country’s prestige. K-pop singers aren’t eligible for the special dispensation.

Tom Hanks draws on his love of space for immersive doc 'The Moonwalkers'

LONDON (AP)—You won't see Tom Hanks on one of those space tourism flights that whisk celebrities and millionaires on a suborbital jaunt for a few hours. He says it wouldn't be enough time out of this world.

"I don't need to go up and down," Hanks said Tuesday. "I think I'd need a little bit longer in paradise."

Going to the moon is another matter — and the subject of "The Moonwalkers," an immersive documentary co-written and narrated by Hanks.

"I'd do that in a second," Hanks said. "I don't have the math. I do not have those abilities, but I'm sure there's something I could do in order to help the program."

The two-time Academy Award-winning actor is a lifelong space buff, and he has channeled his passion into "The Moonwalkers," which opens Wednesday at the Lightroom, a London venue specializing in interactive art and film experiences.

Visitors sit on benches surrounded by imagery as the 50-minute film brings NASA's Apollo space missions to life. The focus is on the 12 men who walked on the moon between 1969 and 1972, the thousands of people who helped them get there and a new generation of astronauts set to return to the moon as part of the Artemis program.

It's a high-tech blend of archive film footage, drawings, animation and digitally remastered photographs—but not, Hanks stresses, any computer-generated images.

"Every photograph, every image was a photograph taken by a human of the subject," Hanks told The Associated Press as he sat in the venue in front of a giant lunar landscape. "So there's nothing fake."

"The Moonwalkers," which runs to April 21, 2024, is subtitled "a journey with Tom Hanks." The actor narrates in his warm, avuncular style and co-wrote the script with British documentary filmmaker Christopher Riley.

The space race is presented as a deeply humanist endeavor that represents humanity's unquenchable curiosity and desire to do things — as President John F. Kennedy said of the moonshot — "not because they are easy but because they are hard."

'Past Lives,' 'May December' and 'American Fiction' lead Spirit Award noms

By LINDSEY BAHR  
AP FILM WRITER

Celine Song's "Past Lives," Todd Haynes' "May December" and Cord Jefferson's "American Fiction" got a leading five nominations, including best feature, from the Film Independent Spirit Awards. Natalie Morales and Joel Kim Booster announced the nominees Tuesday on a YouTube livestream.

Song's quietly romantic film, starring Greta Lee and Teo Yoo as childhood friends who reconnect later in life, earned nominations for her direction, script and for both actors. "May December," about an actress preparing to play a Mary Kay

Letourneau-like role got nods for Natalie Portman, Charles Melton and screenwriter Samy Burch. MGM's "American Fiction," featuring Jeffrey Wright as a frustrated novelist, got recognition for Wright, Erika Alexander and Sterling K. Brown. Jefferson was nominated for his script but not for his direction, however.

It was a good morning for A24. In addition to the nominations for "Past Lives," the indie film company received 11 overall for "All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt," "Earth Mama" and "The Zone of Interest." Kelly Reichardt's "Showing Up" was also named winner

of the Robert Altman Award, which is given to one film's director, casting director and ensemble cast. Michelle Williams plays a small-time sculptor in the film, leading an ensemble that includes André Benjamin, Hong Chau, Judd Hirsch and Amanda Plummer.

Alexander Payne's "The Holdovers," about a curmudgeonly teacher played by Paul Giamatti, got four nominations including for cinematography, best screenplay, best supporting performance for Da'Vine Joy Randolph and best breakthrough for newcomer Dominic Sessa. Neither Payne nor Giamatti were nominated.

Directing nominees were: Andrew Haigh ("All of Strangers"); Ira Sachs ("Passages"); William Oldroyd ("Eileen"); and Haynes and Song.

"Passages" and "All of Us Strangers," nuanced portraits of gay relationships, were also nominated for best feature, as was "We Grown Now."

The Spirit Awards limit eligibility to productions with budgets of \$30 million or less, meaning films like "Oppenheimer," "Maestro" and "Poor Things" did not qualify for nominations. The organization also switched to gender neutral acting awards in 2022.

Alumnus disappointed by 20th class reunion snub

DEAR ABBY: I recently found out that my 20-year high school reunion took place and I wasn't invited. I'm still occasionally in touch with several friends from high school and easy to find on social media. I did attend my 10-year reunion, although I may not have received an invite myself because I went as part of a group.

I wasn't very popular or close to the "in" crowd in high school, but I was social, albeit quirky. I'm sure it was a simple oversight, but I'm having trouble getting past this. I keep thinking about the trope of the loser in high school coming back to the reunion to shine.

Abby, I feel pathetic because I wasn't even asked. I'm not sure I could have gone because I have two babies at home, and we are still somewhat COVID-cautious, but it hurts not to have been invited. Any suggestions for how to stop feeling slighted?

UNWELCOME IN MASSACHUSETTS

DEAR UNWELCOME: Think back. Did you sign up for the alumni association when you attended that 10-year reunion? I'll bet you didn't because if you had, they wouldn't have left you alone and you would be receiving appeals for money and current information. I am pretty sure your omission from the guest list was an oversight. To prevent

it from happening again, all you have to do is be proactive about making sure you are included in the next one.

DEAR ABBY: My common-law husband and my daughter don't get along. Even though he is good with kids, she doesn't want him around her children. The last time we were at her home, he got upset with me. He demanded we leave and went out to the car to wait for me. (I had told my daughter we were staying for two nights; this happened after one night.) My daughter felt he was disrespectful. She was upset and asked me what was going on. I became upset and my granddaughters saw me crying, which got them upset. My daughter then informed me she doesn't want him around her kids again.

Now, a year later, my husband still will not acknowledge any wrongdoing, nor will she. I'm stuck in the middle. He has threatened that if I spend time with her, he will spend time away from home. I am not choosing him over my kids. How can I handle this?

JUST WANTS PEACE IN CANADA

DEAR JUST WANTS PEACE: Handle this by stepping out of the middle. If you want to see your granddaughters, visit them alone. If your common-law husband follows through on his threat to spend time away from home, that would be the perfect time for him to do

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren  
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at [www.DearAbby.com](http://www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

it. If you can't trust him while you take a little family time off, then you don't have much of a marriage—common-law or otherwise.

TO MY READERS: The eight days of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah begin at sundown. Happy Hanukkah, everyone. A joyous Festival of Lights to all of us.

“LATKAS” OF LOVE, ABBY

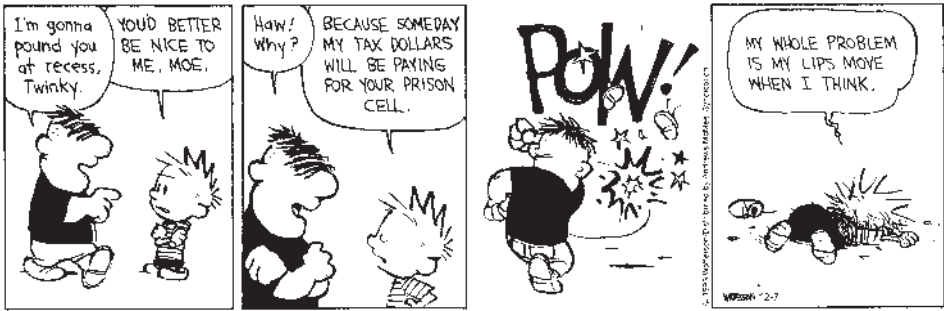
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# Pastimes

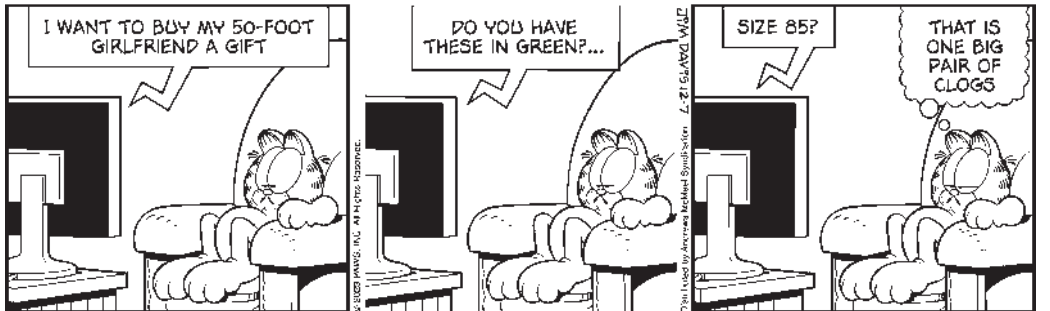
## Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



## Garfield®

By Jim Davis



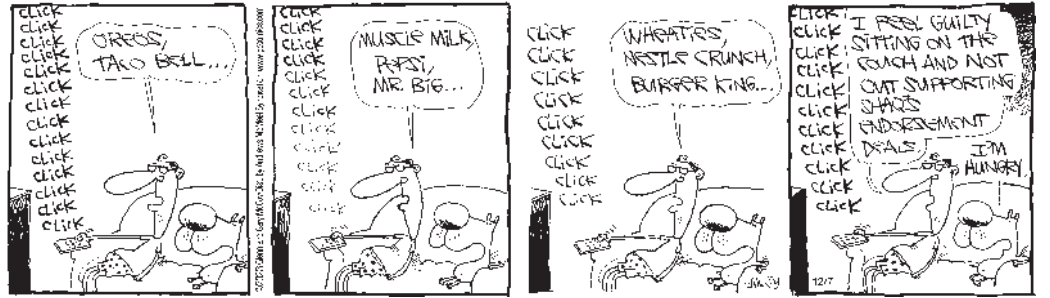
## Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



## The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



## CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Bonfire residue

4 Cougar

8 Author Bellow

12 Soup legume

13 Singer Tori

14 Golden State sch.

15 Put on the air

17 Burnsian turn-downs

18 Calendar abbr.

19 Hot alcoholic drinks

21 Designer Giorgio

24 King, in Cannes

25 Sheepish remark

26 Agrees to

28 Spiked clubs

32 Small statue

34 Flow out

36 Misplace

37 Modify

39 Remote batteries, often

41 — King Cole

42 Billboards

44 Gap

46 Like some phone cards

50 Goof up

51 DVR brand

52 Over-takes, on foot

56 Help in a crime

57 Tend texts

58 Enjoy Vail

59 Taxpayer IDs

60 Actress Ward

61 Levy

4 "Serpico" star

5 Holly-wood's Thurman

6 Lion's share

7 Silents

8 Ancient star Mary

9 Berry used in smoothies

10 Peter Fonda role

11 Girl

16 Geo-logical period

20 Monk's title

21 "Fer-nando" group

22 Julia of film

23 White House nick-name

27 Govt. lender for some start-ups

29 Partner of compare

30 Birthright barterer

31 Match parts

33 Oolong brewers

35 "Hum-bug"

38 Vitamin stat

40 Nap

43 Begets

45 Dadaist artist

46 Sch. supporters

47 Barbecue order

48 Divisible by two

49 Ranch visitor

53 Goose egg

54 Ja-maican music

55 StubHub buys, slangily

Solution time: 24 mins.

Yesterday's answer 12-7

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Emily Browning, 35; C. Thomas Howell, 57; Tom Waits, 74; Ellen Burstyn, 91.

**Happy Birthday:** Trust your instincts, abilities and experience to reach your destination of choice this year. Expand your skills, qualifications and outlook to mesh with what's trending that offers the highest return. Refuse to let emotions interfere with getting things done and meeting your expectations. Let go of the past and press forward with enthusiasm and gratitude. Don't let what others choose to do stand in your way. Your numbers are 9, 13, 21, 24, 32, 39, 44.

**ARIES (March 21-April 19):** Make your decisions count. Don't mince words or let emotions cost you. Tell it like it is and ask for what you want. A direct approach will help you decide your next move and who to work alongside. ★★★

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20):** Emotions will stop you from discovering the truth. Step back, clear your head and look at the facts. Opportunity is apparent, but it will take sound ideas and planning to take advantage of offers. Embrace change with a positive attitude. ★★★

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20):** Get to know your colleagues better. Mix business with pleasure, and you'll gain insight into the constructive use of your skills to advance your agenda. A heart-to-heart talk will bring you closer to a resolution and the stability you need to move forward. ★★★★★

**CANCER (June 21-July 22):** Network, attend a reunion or reconnect with someone beneficial to something you wish to pursue. A partnership looks promising, and the timing is impeccable. Recognition is likely if you follow

through with your plans. Don't fear change or stepping into the spotlight. ★★

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22):** Consider what you love to do most, but clear up unfinished business before you head out to play. Cap your spending on luxury items, entertainment and unnecessary self-improvement projects. Control your ego and avoid overindulgence. ★★★★★

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22):** Tone down your attitude and quietly make the changes that will benefit you. Opportunity and happiness are up to you. Don't allow someone to step in and take over when control on your part is necessary. Anger and upset will hold you back. ★★★

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22):** Do what is necessary and don't look back. Refuse to let emotions stand between you and what you want. Use your Libra charm to get others to see things your way. A disciplined approach to health and money management will help conquer issues. ★★★

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):** Take care of domestic matters swiftly. By searching for unique alternatives, you'll find a lucrative outlet to apply your skills, knowledge and experience. Be secretive regarding your feelings or objectives until you feel comfortable divulging sensitive information. Personal growth is favored. ★★

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):** Take control and don't let go. Trust in your ability to get things done according to your specifications. Relying on others will be disappointing and costly. Channel emotional energy into what you can do instead of wasting time trying to explain yourself to others. ★★★★★

## EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):** Don't let your emotions overrule common sense. Dealing with friends, relatives and colleagues will be difficult if you try to take control. Kindness and consideration will help you reach the root of whatever problems arise and lead to opportunities that surpass your expectations. ★★

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):** Focusing on tidying up loose ends will ease your mind regarding financial, contractual and medical issues. Refuse to let anyone talk you into lavishness or let the changes or decisions others make interfere with your plans. Do what's best for you. ★★★★★

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20):** Consider what's most productive and head in that direction. Refuse to get wrapped up in someone else's drama. Pursue your goals, live up to your word and take good care of yourself and your loved ones. Put restrictions on spending, and update financial and contractual documents. ★★★

**Birthday Baby:** You are persistent, courageous and encouraging. You are protective and reticent.

★: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ★★: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ★★★: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ★★★★★: Aim high; start new projects. ★★★★★: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

## SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

7	5					8	1		
9	8					5			
1	3				8	2			
		7			9	3			
	4	5		6	2		8		
							4		
		1							
5		3	8		4	6		2	
	2				5		9		

Difficulty: ★★★

12/7

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

8	4	1	9	7	3	6	2	5
9	7	3	5	2	6	8	1	4
2	5	6	1	4	8	3	7	9
5	3	9	8	1	2	4	6	7
7	6	8	4	3	9	2	5	1
1	2	4	7	6	5	9	8	3
4	8	7	2	9	1	5	3	6
3	1	5	6	8	4	7	9	2
6	9	2	3	5	7	1	4	8

Difficulty: ★★★

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## WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

GET YOUR STEPS IN

Solution: 6 letters

L	L	I	M	D	A	E	R	T	E	N	N	I	S	A
E	E	F	I	T	N	E	S	S	E	R	O	H	C	T
G	N	V	O	H	G	N	I	N	I	A	R	T	A	H
S	D	D	E	C	T	T	I	U	C	R	I	C	R	L
N	U	A	N	N	U	L	A	P	S	V	T	L	D	E
O	R	N	S	E	I	S	A	O	E	I	N	I	T	
I	A	C	I	T	A	N	C	E	V	T	U	M	O	I
T	N	E	D	U	D	G	I	H	U	O	B	S	C	
A	C	C	E	O	E	N	T	A	S	T	C	R	E	E
L	E	N	W	R	E	Y	A	R	R	G	A	E	I	R
U	E	A	A	L	A	O	G	T	A	D	N	P	R	O
C	K	L	L	S	T	R	O	P	S	I	E	U	O	L
R	I	A	K	D	O	G	E	G	N	U	L	N	L	P
I	H	B	O	N	E	S	C	I	B	O	R	E	A	X
C	O	M	P	E	T	I	T	I	O	N	P	A	C	E

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Active, Activity, Aerobic, Athletic, Balance, Bones, Calories, Cardio, Challenge, Chores, Circuit, Circulation, Climb, Competition, Count, Dance, Dog, Endurance, Evening, Explore, Fitness, Focus, Garden, Goal, Health, Hike, Laps, Legs, Lounge, Lungs, Pace, Path, Route, Sidewalk, Soccer, Sports, Stand, Tennis, Trail, Training, Treadmill

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## STUMPED?

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## IN-SEASON TOURNAMENT

# LeBron leads Lakers to semifinals with 106-103 win over Suns



**LOS ANGELES** (AP) — LeBron James scored 15 of his 31 points in the fourth quarter, and the Los Angeles Lakers secured the last semifinal spot in the inaugural NBA In-Season Tournament with a 106-103 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Tuesday night.

Anthony Davis had 27 points and 15 rebounds and Austin Reaves scored 20 points for the top-seeded Lakers, who will face New Orleans on Thursday in Las Vegas. Milwaukee faces Indiana in the East semifinal.

James put on a masterful shooting performance down the stretch while also racking up 11 assists, eight rebounds and five steals. The 21-year veteran scored 15 of the Lakers' first 19 points in the final period and got the assists on his teammates' other two baskets while Los Angeles pulled ahead.

Kevin Durant scored 31 points, but he badly missed a 3-point attempt at the buzzer for the Suns. Phoenix had won eight of 10 before losing to Los Angeles for the third time already this season.

Devin Booker cut the Lakers' lead to 102-101 on a layup with 29 seconds to play, but Reaves drilled his third 3-pointer with 15 seconds left. Durant made another layup moments later, and Davis missed one of two free throws to open the door for Durant's potential tying shot.

Booker and Grayson Allen scored 21 points apiece for Phoenix.

The Lakers earned the top seed in the West by going un-



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, left, shoots as Phoenix Suns center Jusuf Nurkic defends during the first half of an NBA basketball In-Season Tournament quarterfinal game Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2023, in Los Angeles.

beaten in the group stage of the inaugural tournament, including a win at Phoenix on Nov. 10. The Suns rebounded from that setback to earn a wild-card spot in the knockout round.

While fans are still debating the merits of the In-Season Tournament, both the Lakers' Darvin Ham and Phoenix's Frank Vogel said their players are getting into the spirit of the event, particularly with the motivation to earn financial bonuses for their teams' support personnel and younger players.

"They're well aware of that bag," Ham said with a grin. "Money speaks, man."

Bradley Beal missed his 11th straight game with his persistent back injury for the Suns, who hung in despite committing 22 turnovers while their two healthy superstars struggled with foul trouble. Booker picked up his fifth foul early in the fourth quarter, while Durant entered the final period with four fouls and committed his fifth with 3:18 to play.

Phoenix committed 10 turn-

overs in the first quarter alone, the most by any team in the league this season. The Suns trailed by 15 in the first half, but scored 14 consecutive points out of halftime to take a lead.

## BUCKS 146, KNICKS 122

**MILWAUKEE** (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo had 35 points and 10 assists, Damian Lillard added 28 points, and the Milwaukee Bucks beat the New York Knicks 146-122 on Tuesday night to reach the

semifinals of the NBA's inaugural In-Season Tournament.

The Bucks posted a season high in scoring, shooting 60.5% (23 of 38) from 3-point range and 60.4% overall to set up a matchup with Indiana in Las Vegas on Thursday.

"Tonight was a huge step. We wanted to get to Vegas but when we get to Vegas we've got to take care of business. We've got two games to win there," coach Adrian Griffin said. "I thought tonight our team was the better team. Our bench was terrific

and I thought the crowd was terrific. It had all the makings of a playoff game."

Griffin anticipates a strong challenge from the Pacers.

"We expect their best, but when we are at our best, I love our chances," he said.

Lillard said the Bucks are headed to Las Vegas with the intent of bringing home a championship and setting a tone for the rest of the season.

"You come out of this thing on top, I think it's a pretty strong statement and something that everybody around the league has to respect," he said.

Milwaukee is 5-0 in tournament play and extended its home winning streak to nine games. The Bucks (15-6) have won 10 of 12 overall.

Julius Randle scored a season-high 41 points for the Knicks, whose three-game winning streak was snapped. Jalen Brunson added 24 points and R.J. Barrett scored 23 for New York, which earned a wild-card berth in the knockout round through a point-differential tiebreaker.

"Defensively, we didn't really do anything all game. That's the story. That's it," Brunson said. "They hit a lot of shots. They got comfortable. It's on us to make them uncomfortable."

Antetokounmpo had an injury scare less than two minutes into the game. After tipping in a missed shot, he landed on Randle's foot and rolled his left ankle. Antetokounmpo fell to the floor in pain. He eventually limped up the court but stayed in the game and tallied 10 of the Bucks' first 13 points.

After a tightly contested first half, the Bucks pulled ahead by as many as 18 points in the third quarter. Milwaukee led by as many as 27 in the fourth and Griffin emptied his bench, giving rare playing time to Antetokounmpo's brother, Thanasis, and Robin Lopez, the twin brother of starting center Brook Lopez.

Lillard swished three step-back 3-pointers in the waning stages of the second quarter to give the Bucks at 75-72 lead at halftime. It was the highest-scoring first half this season for Milwaukee.

Lillard thought the Bucks could have scored even more.

"We missed free throws. We missed some shots in the paint. It could have easily been a 165-point game," he said. "That doesn't mean that we can turn into a team that does that every night, but I do think that we have that type of explosiveness."

The Knicks had gone 10-3 since losing to the Bucks in Milwaukee on Nov. 3 in the opener of tournament group play.

## Analysis: Spurs and Pistons have a long road ahead

By **TIM REYNOLDS**  
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

There was so much promise six weeks ago. San Antonio was reveling in the debut of Victor Wembanyama, the No. 1 pick who arrived with amazing fanfare. Detroit had a new coach in Monty Williams—just two years removed from taking Phoenix to the NBA Finals—and a roster featuring five top-five draft picks from the last five years.

The Spurs started 3-2 and had a 21-point lead in the third quarter of their sixth game. The Pistons started 2-1, the only thing keeping them from a 3-0 start was a missed straightaway jumper by Cade Cunningham at the buzzer of their opener in Miami. So much promise, for both teams.

And nothing since. Nothing. As the inaugural NBA In-Season Tournament winds down its quarterfinal round Tuesday and prepares to move amid the glitz and glamour of

Las Vegas for its Final Four—capped Saturday by the awarding of a new trophy and the winning team's players splitting about \$8 million—the Spurs and Pistons are at the other end of the spectrum, mired already at the bottom of the league.

The Spurs have lost 14 in a row, two away from a franchise worst, their 3-16 record matching the worst 19-game start in team history. The Pistons have lost 17 in a row, that streak and their 2-18 record at this point both already the worst in franchise history.

For his part, Wembanyama isn't showing any signs of worry or frustration. The way he sees it, the Spurs are coming to work every day, doing their job and moving closer to figuring things out.

"Everybody knows where we're going," Wembanyama said. "Most of the people here have been through everything before. We're good. We're in good hands."

The Pistons are doing something that the NBA has never seen. Each of these 17 consecutive losses has come with Detroit having scored at least 100 points; no team has ever scored 100 points in at least 17 straight games and come away with exactly zero wins. The offense hasn't been the problem.

Lots of other things have. The Pistons just finished the second-worst November in NBA history, going 0-15. Only Philadelphia has been worse; the 76ers were 0-16 in November 2015, part of a 1-30 start to a season where they finished 10-72.

"We have to have people that honor the organization and the jersey by competing at a high level every night," Williams said after a loss last week, tapping his finger firmly on the table where he was sitting for added emphasis. "Not talking about execution. Just competing."

The Pistons' reason for hope might be this: they don't get blown out too much. Of their

18 losses so far, 13 of them have come by 12 points or less.

The Spurs' reason for hope might be this: they have built big leads—they just lose them. They've lost games after leading by 10 points eight times already this season, lost four after leading by at least 18 points. It's typically just a three- or four-minute stretch where things go haywire.

"During those stretches," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said, "either we don't score or our defense sucks."

Wembanyama says he's been through worse. He thinks a soccer team that he once played for lost more games in a row than the Spurs have. He was the goalie of that team. He insists he was a good goalie. The losing streak might suggest otherwise.

"I swear it wasn't my fault," Wembanyama said.

He's been dealing with a little bit of hip soreness, his first official NBA injury issue. A



# Yankees get outfielder Alex Verdugo from Red Sox



**NASHVILLE, Tenn.**  
(AP)—The

New York Yankees made a rare trade with the rival Boston Red Sox, acquiring outfielder Alex Verdugo on Tuesday night for right-handers Greg Weissert, Richard Fitts and Nicholas Judice.

Verdugo, a 27-year-old left-handed hitter, batted .264 with 13 homers, 54 RBIs and a .745 OPS this year in his fourth season with the Red Sox. A Gold Glove finalist, he had 12 outfield assists and nine defensive runs saved.

A seven-year major league veteran, Verdugo has a .281 career batting average with 57 homers and 255 RBIs with the Los Angeles Dodgers and Red Sox.

Selected by the Dodgers in the second round of the 2014 amateur draft, Verdugo was acquired by Boston with infielder Jeter Downs and catcher/second baseman Connor Wong in the February 2020 trade that sent slugger Mookie Betts and pitcher David Price to the Dodgers.

Verdugo is eligible for arbitration and is likely to get a salary of about \$9 million. He can become a free agent after the World Series.

If the Yankees don't make an additional move such as acquiring Juan Soto from San



Boston Red Sox's Alex Verdugo runs on his two-run home run during the first inning of a baseball game against the Oakland Athletics, Saturday, July 8, 2023, in Boston.

Diego, Verdugo would be likely to see considerable time in left field. Ten players played left for New York last season topped by Oswaldo Cabrera, who appeared there in 51 games and batted .211 overall with 29 RBIs.

It was just the eighth trade between the teams since Major League Baseball split into divisions in 1969. The Yankees obtained outfielder Greg Allen from Boston in May for right-hander Diego Hernández.

The most notable deals involved the Yankees' 1919 purchase of Babe Ruth, New York getting pitcher Sparky Lyle in 1972 for first baseman Danny Cater and infielder Mario Guerrero, and Boston receiving Elston Howard—the Yankees' first Black play-

er and the 1963 AL MVP—in 1967 for pitchers Ron Klimkowski and Pete Magrini.

Weissert, a 28-year-old right-hander who attended Fordham, not far from Yankee Stadium, had a 4.05 ERA in 17 relief appearances over five stints with New York last season. He struck out 22 and walked eight in 20 innings. His fastball averaged 94.3 mph.

Fitts, 23, was a sixth-round pick from Auburn in the 2021 amateur draft and was 11-5 with a 3.48 ERA in 27 starts this year at Double-A Somerset. He struck out 163 and walked 43 in 152 2/3 innings.

Judice, 22, was an eighth-round pick last summer from the University of Louisiana at Monroe and has not made his minor league debut yet.

## Angels will not trade 3-time AL MVP Mike Trout, general manager confirms

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** (AP)—The Los Angeles Angels will not trade three-time AL MVP Mike Trout, general manager Perry Minasian confirmed at MLB's winter meetings on Tuesday.

Minasian responded to the annual questions about Trout's future with the underachieving Angels by providing the same answer he has given in past years—and the same answer given by owner Arte Moreno's previous general managers.

"Mike Trout will not be getting traded, 100%," Minasian told MLB.com and other outlets.

Trout is under contract through 2030, and he makes \$35.45 million annually with a full no-trade clause. But even after he missed significant portions of the past three seasons due to injuries, his future in Anaheim remains an annual topic of debate due to his formidable talent and the Angels' annual failures to achieve any team success.

The 32-year-old Trout has participated in one playoff series and has never won a postseason game in a 13-year career spent entirely with the Halos. Los Angeles is currently mired in streaks of eight consecutive losing seasons and nine consecutive non-playoff seasons, both the longest in the majors.

Trout is owed \$248.15 million over the next seven seasons as part of his record \$426.5 million, 12-year contract with the Angels.

He is coming off the least impressive season of his career, during which he was limited to 82 games—just one after July 3—due to a broken bone in his left hand. He batted .263 with 18 homers and 44 RBIs while playing in just

82 games, although he was still named an AL All-Star for the 11th time.

"Let me put it this way: I would have bet my house he would have had a better second half than his first half," Minasian said. "But he just didn't get that opportunity. I think it was just a freak injury that took a long time to heal."

Trout has played in just 237 of the Angels' 486 games over the past three seasons, thanks to several injury setbacks. But Minasian also confirmed the Angels haven't proposed moving Trout out of center field, where he must be more active and burn more energy than in a corner outfield slot.

Minasian reiterated that the Angels are not mounting a wholesale rebuild, and they intend to win with Trout leading the way while fortifying their lineup and pitching staff during the offseason.

The club is also waiting to find out whether Shohei Ohtani will surprise the baseball world and return to the Angels despite their lack of success during his six years with fellow superstar Trout. Ohtani met with the Dodgers in the past few days, their general manager, Dave Roberts, said Tuesday.

The Angels will play next year under new manager Ron Washington, who said last month that Trout and Anthony Rendon are key leaders and players for the club.

Rendon has been a massive disappointment for Los Angeles, batting .249 with a .758 OPS while playing in just 200 of the Angels' 546 games in his injury-plagued tenure. But the third baseman is under contract for three more seasons, making more than \$38.5 million each year.

## Dodgers acknowledge meeting with Ohtani. Yankees covet Yamamoto

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** (AP)—Dave Roberts started to dodge the question about Shohei Ohtani, rocking back and forth in his seat and staying silent for three seconds before his big admission:

"Yeah, we met with him," the Los Angeles Dodgers manager said Tuesday at the winter meetings, making Roberts' club the first to publicly admit a sit-down with the unique two-way player likely to break baseball's salary record.

Officials on other teams danced meticulously around the question as if choreographed by Bob Fosse. Toronto general manager Ross Atkins, who sparked speculation of a possible meeting by holding his Monday media availability on Zoom rather than at the winter meetings hotel, had this to say: "Some meetings that occur, that don't occur, I'm not going to get into the specifics of."

New Chicago Cubs manager Craig Counsell batted away Ohtani queries as if in a cross-examination. After saying he had not met with Ohtani, Counsell was asked whether anyone in the Cubs front office had. Counsell replied: "I have not."

Japanese pitcher Yoshinobu Yamamoto, another prized

free agent, could be sought by the New York Yankees and Mets, who set payroll records this year in their third season under owner Steve Cohen. The Mets' projected final 2023 payroll is about \$346 million and their luxury tax roughly \$102 million.

"I don't know if anybody can compete with Steve Cohen," Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said. "He's obviously a titan of industry. He's had a lot of success and built an empire which has allowed him to do things like the Mets. ... We can just concentrate on what we're going to concentrate on. Obviously, it's a player of interest and we'll compete for him and see where that takes us, and it will be enough or won't be enough."

Cashman also has talked about trying to acquire slugger Juan Soto from San Diego. The outfielder is eligible for free agency after next season, and Padres president of baseball operations A.J. Preller has discussed swaps.

New Padres manager Mike Shildt plans to meet with Soto in Miami on Dec. 17.

"He's a transformational bat. He's one of the best hitters in the game. So he's im-

pact, period," Cashman said. "I know A.J. probably is being open-minded to do a lot of different things."

In the meantime, the Yankees made a rare trade with the rival Boston Red Sox, acquiring outfielder Alex Verdugo for reliever Greg Weissert and two minor league pitchers.

Only one relatively small signing was announced during the day. Tampa Bay agreed to a \$1.1 million, one-year contract with reliever Chris Devenski, a deal that includes a club option for 2025.

Erick Fedde, a 30-year-old right-hander who spent this year with the NC Dinos in South Korea, agreed to a \$15 million, two-year contract with the Chicago White Sox, a person familiar with the deal said. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the agreement was subject to a successful physical.

Marco Gonzales' time with the Atlanta Braves lasted just two days, ending when the left-hander was traded to Pittsburgh along with cash for a player to be named or cash. Atlanta acquired the 31-year-old left-hander from Seattle on Sunday night with outfielder Jarred Kelenic, infielder Evan

White and \$4.5 million for right-handers Cole Phillips and Jackson Kowar.

Also, Cleveland won the MLB draft lottery and will have the top pick for the first time when selections are made on July 14.

Roberts said Ohtani met with the team at Dodger Stadium for two-to-three hours a few days earlier and called the two-time AL MVP "our top priority."

"I think that he had questions for us, just trying to get more of the landscape. But being in this league for six years, he's got a pretty good idea of the Dodgers, what we're about, the city itself," Roberts said.

Cashman went to Japan to watch Yamamoto and saw him pitch his second career no-hitter on Sept. 9 for the Orix Buffaloes against the Lotte Marines.

"A lot of teams went over there with their executives and I certainly wasn't going to make the mistake of not being one of the executives that went over there, too," Cashman said. "Certainly a negotiation is an important part of it, but I also think those type of personal touches are also important."



# NMBA caps season with national championships



The Northern Marianas Badminton Association will wrap up the 2023 season by staging the NMI Badminton National Championships this weekend at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The season finale will feature competitions in the U17 age group and the open category. Both divisions will have the singles, doubles, and mixed doubles events. As of yesterday, nearly 50 players have signed up for the tournament that will run from Dec. 8 to 10.

Majority of the registered participants are part of the junior national training pool that went through a training camp under Robbie Thackham, Coaching and Development manager for Badminton Oceania, last month at the TSL Sports Complex. This weekend's competition will also feature senior players that have undergone the similar training camp with the Badminton Oceania official.

"It's time for our players



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Junior player Lina Tsukagoshi, left, and senior player Janelle Pangilinan, seen here in a competition NMBA hosted last September, are teaming up anew to compete in the NMI Badminton National Championships this weekend at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

to showcase what they have learned from the training camp. They had a pocket tournament

of sorts during Robbie's training camp, but this time, we will have our regular competi-

tion where players' skill levels are mixed," NMBA president Merlie Tolentino said.

## LOCAL

From page 20

and third with times of 1:55:17 and 1:55:18.

Finally, Willy Barbo topped the men's over 60 age group after checking in at 1:47:29. Edgar Abalos and Manny Sitchon finished in the Top 3 with times of 1:50:00 and 2:04:10, respectively.

In the road bike short course, Kris Romero and Beth Kohnen rode solo in the women's 30-39 and over 60 divisions and finished with times of 2:33:40 and 2:11:48, respectively.

Ian Manalo also was the lone wolf in the men's 30-39 and came in at 2:07:13. Ditto for Bobax Aguilar in the men's over 60 (2:17:38).

Matthew Fehrenbacher of Saipan was *numero uno* in the men's 40-49 (2:00:50) followed by Japan's Yoshinori Makino (2:34:58) and Saipan's Dexter Bertulfo (2:37:58).

Renan "Butch" Sublemente dominated the 50-59 with a time of 1:43:02 with Raymund Tolentino and Greg Clark second

and third with times of 1:52:20 and 1:55:55, respectively.

Barbo, who has taken part in the HOM since its inception in 2007, said the hardest part of the race are always the hills going to Kagman, Kingfisher Golf Links, and in Marpi.

Sublemente, for his part, said he just took on the challenge of the short course this year because of lack of training. He vows to register for the 100K long course next year.

Felipe said winning her age group in her HOM debut was a big blessing.

"I'm very thankful for this unforgettable experience and I'm still shocked that I won my age group. I'm also grateful that I was able to cross the finish line without any injuries and even without enough practice. To be able to share this experience and memory with riders from other countries is a great privilege and a great way to end this year," she said.

Romero, who is an avid swimmer, said she was hoping for rain earlier in the course, but it only poured when she



MARK RABAGO

Women's short course 40-49 winner Jay Anne Felipe is flanked by second place Shawna Brennfleck, left, and third place Marjorie Ganacias during the awards ceremony for the 2023 Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle last Saturday at Hyatt Regency Saipan.



MARK RABAGO

Men's short course MTB winner Renan "Butch" Sublemente is flanked by second place Raymund Tolentino, left, and third place Greg Clark during the awards ceremony for the 2023 Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle last Saturday at Hyatt Regency Saipan.

already was in Papago.

"Like I said before I get my strength from rain and I'm a more confident and comfortable riding when water touched my body," she said in Filipino.

Results of the long course age group will be published in tomorrow's issue of *Saipan Tribune*.

The 2023 Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle was spon-

sored by Seman Law Offices LLC, Tan Holdings and Tan Siu Lin Foundation, IP&E, Turn-Key Solutions, Triple J Group of Companies, Pacific Trading Co., Hyatt Regency Saipan, The Bike Shop Saipan, Marpac Inc., and Herman's Modern Bakery. It was organized by the Northern Mariana Islands Cycling Federation with help from the Marianas Visitors Authority.

The NMI Badminton National Championships is also a good warm-up for U17 players that are preparing for next month's TakeCare Interscholastic Badminton League 2023-2024 Season, High School Division. Marianas High School won last season's co-ed high school championship over Agape Christian School and the Dolphins have a bunch of entries both in the U17 age group and open category in the season-finales tournament.

Some junior players are teaming up with the seniors to compete in the open division, while there are also junior players pairing up to challenge the seniors. Janelle Pangilinan is entered with Saipan International School's Lina Tsu-

kagoshi in the women's open doubles, while Kyle Salcedo is with Prapti Modal in the mixed doubles in the open category, which has several adult players, including former national players Andrew Galvez and Nathan Guerrero.

The boys U17 singles has 10 entries, while five will battle for the girls U17 singles tiara. In the boys doubles, there are six teams, while the girls has four, and the mixed doubles has drawn nine pairs. In the open category, the men's singles field has 14; women's has three; men's doubles has 10 teams; women's doubles has five; and mixed doubles is crowded with 12 pairs. Draws for each event will be announced tomorrow, Friday. (PR)

## LA

From page 20

of doubles matches and split them. Playing with Matthew Saint, he triumphed against Austen Keni and Jacques Rupe, 6-0, 6-4. The duo, however, lost to top seeds Luca Bland and Damien M-Budiono, 4-6, 3-6, in their next match.

All in all, Lam said the 2023 Tennis New Zealand 14U Junior Championships gave him a wealth of experience.

"It was a great experience for me overall. I started with no confidence due to the injuries on my hip and elbow, but I have learned a lot playing against great players and some cheaters. Everything was a helpful experience in improving my game to play in the strong wind (different weather conditions) and against good level of players. More importantly I have learned how to deal with difficult moments against tricky players and I realized I need to raise my voice to fight for my rights," he told *Saipan Tribune* in a social media message.

De Gouy continued to praise Lam for showing a

positive spirit under duress and believes his attitude will bring him to greater heights in tennis.

"Great work ethic and attitude, regardless if he's winning or losing...I do believe that attitude is everything," he said in another report to OTF.

Malcom Kajir, who observed Lam while coaching the Pacific Oceania U12 team, said Lam indeed has a bright future in the sport.

"Coming from a Pacific Island he was able to compete with the top 14-and-under players from New Zealand. Even though he narrowly went down in a close first game he was able to regroup and win several of his other matches. Just with more intense training and overseas match plays, which is the key, he would have a great opportunity to do well in this age group as he will have another year to be in the boys 14-and-under age group. A lot of this year's stronger 14-year-olds will be moving to the next age group up. There's every opportunity for him to win in this age group next year," he said in social media message to *Saipan Tribune*.

## BOURBON

From page 20

In the second game, Maplas outlasted Unity Trade in an offensively anemic encounter, 53-49.

Moise Tagle Jr. and Dennis Cortez scored 14 points and 13 points, respectively, to spearhead Maplas to its third win in four tries. Unity Trade, which dropped to 1-3, meanwhile saw Dan Mateo as the only double-digit scorer with 15 markers.

The Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational Basketball League is made up of eight teams with Al-liana's (4-1), Team Legends (4-1) Guardians (3-1), and Johnny's Bar & Grill (0-3 Bourbon Bar & Café) also seeing action.

## First Game

**Bourbon Bar & Café 83** – Manansala 25, Narciso 17, Es-mores 13, Gragasim 8, Mallari 6, Binuya 6, Lopez 4, Jose 2.

**Eagles 72** – Darag 13, Ibajan 13, Buniag 10, Sandig 8, Omampo 6, Nunez 4, Ytac 3, Formales 3, Poquiz 3.

**Scoring by quarters:** 19-19, 30-21, 65-59, 83-72.

## Second Game

**Maplas 53** – Tagle 14, Cortez 13, Rueda 9, Odicia 8, Tagle 5, De Ramos 2, Usi 2.

**Unity Trade 49** – Mateo 15, Quizon 8, Garcia 6, Rodriguez 6, Hernandez 5, Estores 5, Rejano 4.

**Scoring by quarters:** 21-10, 34-28, 43-40, 53-49.



MARK RABAGO

Kris Romero was the lone rider in the women's MTB short course 30-39 age group.





**LeBron leads Lakers to semifinals with 106-103 win over Suns.**

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# Saipan Tribune Sports

**NMBA caps season with national championships.**

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**20** THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2023

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

## La Hunn concludes NZ tourney on high note

By MARK RABAGO  
mark\_rabago@saipantribune.com  
EDITOR

**L**a Hunn Lam won his last two games to finish in 22nd place in the 2023 Tennis New Zealand 14U Junior Championships held in Wilding Park in Christchurch.

Last Tuesday, the 13-year-old beat Eddie Bassett, 6-1, 6-2, to conclude his stint in New Zealand.

The day before on Monday, Lam arranged a playoff for the 22nd spot in the tourney after defeating Cullem McCashin, 6-3, 6-0.

The twin wins to wrap up the Tennis New Zealand 14U Junior Championships made up for Lam's 1-2 start to the tourney.

He debuted with a tough 1-6, 7-5 loss to Paxton Man-

ning last Dec. 1 but followed that up with a 6-3, 6-1 victory against Nicholas Rayner last Dec. 2.



The following day, Lam absorbed a 2-6, 4-6 beating in the hands of Max Flanagan.

Pacific Oceania 14U coach Gilles De Gouy applauded Lam's spunk on his first match despite being injured and playing against a physically more dominant opponent

"La Hunn just lost against a more powerful and physi-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
La Hunn Lam in action during his stint in the Tennis New Zealand 14U Junior Championships held in Wilding Park in Christchurch.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
La Hunn Lam, second from left, poses with his Pacific Oceania teammates and 14U coach Gilles De Gouy in the Tennis New Zealand 14U Junior Championships held in Wilding Park in Christchurch.

### Bourbon Bar & Café keep Eagles flightless

By MARK RABAGO  
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EDITOR

Bourbon Bar & Café improved to a win-loss standing of 2-2 after finishing off Eagles late, 83-72, in the continuation of the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational Basketball League last Tuesday at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

Both teams were even stevens after a quarter of play, 19-19, before Paul Joan Manansala waxed hot in the second quarter by pouring in 11 of his game-high 25 points to lift the restaurateurs to a 30-21 half-time spread.

Eagles got to spread their wings a bit at the start of the

third quarter with Joel Buniag and Jonathan Ibajan combining for 11 points to help them cut Bourbon Bar & Café's lead to just 6 points, 65-59, heading into the fourth and final quarter.



Bourbon Bar & Café, however, would save its best for last, outgunning Eagles, 18-13, in the match's final 10 minutes to win by 9 points.

Manansala's 25 big points was ably supported by the 17 markers of July Narciso, while Roi Esmores chipped in 13 more. The Eagles' losing cause was paced by the 13 points of Ibajan and the 10 of Buniag. The team continues to languish at the cellar at 0-5.

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Bourbon Bar & Café players pose for a team photo after their win against the Eagles late in the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational Basketball League last Tuesday at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

cal player than him. La Hunn is also injured (elbow) and not playing at 100% which does not help. Despite that, he showed a great work eth-

ic and attitude," he said in a report to the Oceania Tennis Federation.

Lam also played in a couple

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### Local riders dominate 50K age group divisions

By MARK RABAGO  
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EDITOR

**Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle**  
Local riders dominated the age group divisions of the 50-kilometer short course of last Saturday's 2023 Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle.

Heather Brook was the lone participant in the women's 30-39 road bike division and finished with a time of 2:09:23. Her namesake, Heather Kennedy, was also the lone rider in the women's 50-59 and came in at 1:58:36.

Jay Anne Felipe, meanwhile, topped a crowded field



MARK RABAGO

Men's short course over 60 age group winner Willy Barbo is flanked by second place Edgar Abalos, left, and Manny Sitchon during the awards ceremony for the 2023 Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle last Saturday at Hyatt Regency Saipan.

in the women's 40-49 and won with a time of 1:48:18 to beat out Shawna Brennfleck (1:49:29) and Marjorie Gancias (1:56:23)

Jomer Enriquez was first in the men's 30-39 with at time of 1:48:10, followed by Roy Hernandez and Justin Miller at 1:53:26 and 1:55:44, respectively.

In the men's 40-49, Dennis Bautista ruled the roost after speeding to the finish line in 1:41:07. Nelson Pagaduan was second in 1:42:53 and Teddy Calma third in 1:44:06.

Cesar Fortaleza, meanwhile, took the plum in the men's 50-59 clocking in at 1:42:48 with recent returnee Ronald Villafria and Matt Buenabajo in second

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